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Antioxidants

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INTRODUCTION

PLENTIFUL PIGMENTS

Brightly hued produce is packed with antioxidants. Eating in color helps you dial up the variety of fruits and vegetables while enjoying the potent health benefits.

BY GABRIELLE McPHERSON, M.S., RDN, LDN

Debate on the health benefits of meat, grains and dairy trudges onward. But there's little squabble over the importance of eating produce. Fruits and vegetables, full of nutritious antioxidants, are the cornerstone of a healthy eating pattern. But only 9 to 12 percent of Americans eat enough of them, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And a report based on evidence from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey determined that 80 percent of Americans lack a diversity of fruit and vegetable colors in their diet. Mounting evidence shows fruits and vegetables offer protective benefits that taper the risks of disease—especially heart disease, the leading cause of death in the U.S. In 2017, the World Health Organization attributed

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3.9 million deaths globally to low produce intake. "Processed and refined foods still make up [most] of the average American diet, so if there was a collective shift toward fresh produce, that would have a dramatic impact on health, regardless of whether people are eating vegetables and fruits one at a time or in combination," says Lauren Kelley-Chew, M.D., head of clinical product at Levels.

Fruits and vegetables owe their health benefits to many things: their wealth of fiber, vitamins and minerals, antioxidants and phytonutrients. To maximize nutrition while making healthy eating more achievable, you should "eat the rainbow," a popular mantra that embraces the full-color spectrum of produce, from red and orange to purple and blue. Antioxidants can be found in a range of colorful foods, and each color provides particular health benefits. "Unlike so much dietary guidance, which is confusing and complicated, 'eating the rainbow' is pretty straightforward," says Kelley-Chew. "We make so many decisions each day about food, so having simple guidance can have a very powerful impact."

EAT THE RAINBOW, REAP THE BENEFITS

The brilliant pigments of fruits and vegetables are striking. "Nature did something pretty cool by color-coding all of its nutrients for us," says Leigh-Anne Wooten, M.S., RDN, LDN, FAND, a registered dietitian and nutrition adviser at Vitamix. "Each color we find in plants represents a specific phytonutrient [plant chemical] that helps to prevent disease and keep the body working properly."

While individual fruits and vegetables contain numerous nutrients that complement whole-body wellness, each color of the rainbow correlates with specific health benefits.

REDUCE CANCER RISK WITH RED

Cherries, beets, tomatoes, apples, red peppers, red onions—these vibrant scarlet fruits and vegetables

TO GET ALL THE DISEASE-FIGHTING POWER, CHOOSE FOODS THAT REPRESENT ALL COLORS OF THE RAINBOW.

have more in common than their shared color. “These red gems are wonderful because they contain the antioxidant lycopene, which may help suppress cancer cells,” says Amy Gorin, M.S., RDN, an inclusive plant-based dietitian in Stamford, Connecticut, and the owner of Plant Based with Amy. A 2017 review of 42 studies published in the journal *Prostate Cancer and Prostatic Diseases* found that dietary intake of lycopene and circulating lycopene in the blood was significantly linked with a lower risk of prostate cancer. A 2016 study published in the journal *Tumor Biology* found that dietary lycopene also showed anti-cancer effects by hindering the growth of prostate cancer and breast cancer cells. Several studies of humans, animals and cells suggest that watermelon, cranberries, cherries, pomegranates, apples and raspberries may support immune health, reduce infections and lower inflammation, thus repelling chronic diseases such as cancer. Though red fruits and vegetables possess a wide range of phytonutrients, lycopene is unique to this rosy-toned group.

RAMP UP REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH WITH ORANGE

Eye-catching orange fruits and vegetables such as pumpkins, apricots, winter squashes and sweet potatoes get their vivid hue from a group of antioxidants called carotenoids. Carotenoids such as beta carotene and beta cryptoxanthin convert into vitamin A, an antioxidant essential to vision and immune health. Multiple studies have tested the impact of carotenoids on hormone and reproductive health as specific carotenoids gather in these areas of the body. For example, one study of 100 women found beta cryptoxanthin in ovarian tissues. A 2018 study of 70,835 women approaching menopause, published in *Human Reproduction,* looked for a potential connection between fruit intake and endometriosis risk. Endometriosis is a condition in which tissues grow outside the uterus, causing pain, irregular menstrual cycles and infertility. Women who ate one or more servings of citrus fruits daily had a 22 percent lower risk of endometriosis compared to women who ate one serving or less per week. A 2016 study in *Human Fertility* discovered an association between menopause onset and beta-cryptoxanthin and fruit intake in 1,146 premenopausal women followed for about 12.5 years. The study suggested that eating 400 micrograms of beta cryptoxanthin (or one large tangerine) from orange-colored fruits each day might delay the aging of the ovaries, a sign of menopause.

DEFEND DIGESTIVE HEATH WITH YELLOW

Their bright sunny hue makes yellow fruits and vegetables hard to miss, and the phytonutrients in yellow produce may be good for your digestive tract. Bananas are a major source of dietary fiber known as resistant starches. Unripe bananas hold the highest levels of resistant starches, which function as prebiotics, feeding the gut bacteria to support gut health. Moreover, the acid in citrus fruits such as lemons may help you digest starchy foods. Depending on the types of foods, starches can cause a rapid rise in blood sugar levels. One 2018 study saw slower increases of blood sugars after participants ate starchy meals with lemon juice compared to starchy meals with water. Another yellow phytonutrient, nobiletin, may help prevent gastric ulcers, according to research. Ginger, a yellow plant root used widely in cooking, has been extensively studied for its effect on multiple gastrointestinal issues, including nausea, vomiting, stomach discomfort, bloating and indigestion. Its use as an alternative treatment for the nausea and vomiting that can occur with pregnancy and cancer treatment shows its safety. On top of that, ginger includes 400 active compounds, making it a significant yellow plant food with many health benefits.

GUARD YOUR HEART WITH GREEN

Mama used to say to eat your greens, and she wasn't wrong! Green produce owes its rich coloring to a compound called chlorophyll, and green vegetables are good sources of flavonoids, potassium, vitamin K and natural nitrates that may protect cardiovascular health. "Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, kale and brussels sprouts are always on the top of my list because they have lots of sulforaphane, which is great for reducing inflammation and detoxifying," says Sarah Bird, D.N.P., IFMCP, a functional medicine nurse practitioner at PALM Health in St. Louis, Missouri. A 2018 study published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* found an inverse relationship between high intake of cruciferous vegetables and a lower risk of atherosclerosis (plaque buildup in the arteries), with inflammation being a common cause. A 2016 meta-analysis published in the journal *JRSM Cardiovascular Disease* concluded that almost daily consumption of green leafy vegetables could reduce cardiovascular diseases by 15.8 percent. Popular heart-healthy diets, such as the Mediterranean and Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diets—both teeming with green leafy vegetables and cruciferous vegetables—have a positive influence cholesterol levels, inflammation markers, blood pressure and other indicators of heart health.

While individual fruits and vegetables contain nutrients that complement whole-body wellness, each color has specific health benefits.

BOLSTER YOUR BRAINPOWER WITH PURPLE AND BLUE

"In the U.S. diet, most individuals lack phytonutrients from purple and blue foods, like eggplant, beets, berries and currants, so keeping these in mind is also important," says Bird. Purple and blue plants owe their deep, bold shades to phytonutrients called anthocyanins. Gorin recommends incorporating them into your eating routine by trying wild blueberries, which are smaller than cultivated blueberries, but they pack a punch of flavor and nutrition. "They offer two times the health-helping antioxidants of conventional blueberries," she says, "and they have big brain-health benefits. Regularly eating wild blueberries has been proven to help brain health." She points to a study in the *European Journal of Nutrition* that showed older adults who added wild blueberries to their daily diet for three months made fewer mistakes on memory tests, and a study in *Nutritional Neuroscience* that found older adults who regularly ate wild blueberries had a faster cognitive processing speed. Frozen blueberries are a great option when fresh berries are not in season. Frozen fruits and vegetables are picked and frozen at peak ripeness, which also means peak nutrition.

STRENGTHEN IMMUNE DEFENSE WITH WHITE AND BROWN

White and brown foods don't deliver the intensity of color that their counterparts do, but what they lack in hue, they make up for in nutrition. Cauliflower, fennel, leeks, artichokes and white nectarines contain lots of nutrients, such as fiber, folate, vitamin B_6, potassium and selenium. More specifically, selenium, a micronutrient, plays a strong role in immune support, and when it's deficient, your body is more prone to develop infections and even cancer. "Examples of phytonutrients found in white and brown fruits and vegetables like garlic and tea leaves include allicin and epigallocatechin gallate [EGCG]," says Jeff Gladd, M.D., a practicing integrative medicine physician and the chief medical officer at Fullscript.

Allicin is behind the pungent odor of cut garlic cloves, and cell studies show it positively impacts immune health. A 2019 study published in *Free Radical Biology and Medicine* found that allicin

causes zinc (critical to healthy immune function) to release from certain proteins, stimulating an immune response. In addition, several studies indicate EGCG may help prevent infections by regulating inflammation, further supporting your body's immune defense. Plant nutrients may work synergistically to strengthen health benefits for the body. "Together, plant foods may offer greater benefits than when eaten on their own," says Gladd. "There's some evidence to suggest that combining some foods may enhance the bioavailability of their phytonutrients. For example, when added to green tea, lemon may enhance EGCG absorption."

HOW TO CREATE A COLORFUL PLATE

Eating the rainbow is all about addition, not restriction. "Take a quick scan of your plate at each meal and each snack and say to yourself, 'Can I add some color here?'" says Frances Largeman-Roth, RDN, nutrition expert and author of *Eating in Color: Delicious, Healthy Recipes for You and Your Family.* "If you're looking at a beige bowl of pasta, it's easy to add some cherry tomatoes and arugula. If you have a cup of yogurt, throw in some blueberries or grapes. Got a sandwich? Add fresh spinach leaves. Blend frozen berries or frozen spinach into a smoothie. And if you're eating a salad, make sure it's not just green! You can add leftover roasted veggies or any other fruit or veggie you have on hand." And on your next grocery or farmers market visit, consider choosing a color you wouldn't normally select. (For the best-tasting produce at the right price, stick to buying seasonally.) It might be red radishes, purple eggplants or white jicama—whatever you choose, you're one step closer to making an attractive plate while fighting illness. You can also make your fruits and vegetables easy to drink with homemade smoothies. "You may be surprised at the variety of colors you can create with a smoothie," says Wooten. "While spinach and kale are popular ingredients, have you ever added beets, butternut squash or broccoli into your blended creations? I'm not sure which you will be more impressed by—the colors or the flavor!"

The best part? Eating with a color palette in mind gives your body what it needs to thrive and gives you a chance to feel your best and potentially prolong your life. "There's no need to worry about measuring or counting every serving. We can simply eat the rainbow," Wooten says. ●

CHAPTER

1

Keeping You Healthy

Antioxidants prevent oxidation in the body's healthy cells. But what exactly does that mean? Discover how these compounds protect your body, brain and more.

STUDIES SHOW THAT HIGH CITRUS INTAKE MAY LOWER THE RISK OF CERTAIN CANCERS.

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STAVE OFF ILLNESS

According to researchers, a diet full of antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables can limit your risk of developing heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers.

BY AKANKSHA SINGH

From green tea and coffee to broccoli and dark chocolate, the benefits of antioxidants are a point of discussion in the health and wellness industry—and with good reason. Studies show that a higher intake of antioxidant-rich fruits, vegetables and legumes is associated with a lower risk of chronic oxidative stress–related ailments such as cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Antioxidants work by “fighting” free radicals in the body, explains Sarah Whipkey, a registered dietitian nutritionist based in Houston. Free radicals are molecules that sometimes damage cells and genetic material through a process called oxidation. Antioxidants can prevent that process. “When we turn food into energy, we create free radicals as harmful by-products,” Whipkey says. “We can also form free radicals from exposure to pollutants, cigarette smoke and sunlight,” and from exercise. Antioxidants are substances from food that confront free radicals, repair the DNA and keep our cells healthy. Although we can get antioxidants from food, our bodies produce them as well.

LOWERING DISEASE RISK

The antioxidants with the most commonly researched health benefits include vitamin C, beta-carotene and vitamin E. A 2022 study published in the journal *Nature* found that increased vitamin E intake reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death worldwide. Similar studies going as far back as 2009 found that beta-carotene may help prevent certain types of cancer, including lung cancer, pancreatic cancer and breast cancer. More recently, a 2017 study of more than 2,500 people published in the peer-reviewed journal *Frontiers of Oncology* found that eating fruits and vegetables rich in carotenoids and fat-soluble pigments (such as beta carotene) had a protective effect against lung cancer.

It is important to note, however, that newer and more widespread studies are needed before solid conclusions can be reached to fully understand the role beta carotene plays in cancer prevention. For instance, there is contradictory research that suggests beta carotene supplements in smokers exacerbate the risk of lung cancer.

“Antioxidants are some of the most powerful and important nutrients that our body needs for its well-being," says Kellie K. Middleton, M.D., M.P.H., an Atlanta-based surgeon. "Eating foods rich in antioxidants is important for overall health and wellness."

Both Middleton and Whipkey recommend concentrating on a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables to maximize the benefits of antioxidants. Although meat and fish products also contain antioxidants, they occur in a lesser concentration and to a lesser extent in animal-based sources compared to plant-based sources.

Additionally, the benefits of antioxidants such as resveratrol in red wine and polyphenols and hydrocinnamic acids in coffee should be considered within a larger health context. While it's true that studies have confirmed that coffee is the biggest source of antioxidants in the Western diet, these findings are partially skewed by the fact that the average individual doesn't eat enough antioxidant-rich foods. Similarly, while red wine may be a beneficial source of antioxidants that may have a protective impact on cardiovascular health and cancer risk, moderation is advised.

A 2022 study found that increased vitamin E intake reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death worldwide.

The experts recommend paying extra attention to antioxidant-packed produce including dark leafy greens, such as kale or chard; bell peppers; beans, such as pinto, black and red kidney; and berries.

Blueberries in particular are often dubbed the "king of superfoods" because they happen to contain one of the highest antioxidant levels of all common fruits and vegetables. A 2002 clinical trial published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* found that blueberries directly increase antioxidant levels in the human body. A 2022 scientific review published in the *Journal of Functional Foods* also confirmed that blueberries directly increase antioxidant levels. The anthocyanin pigments that give blueberries their rich purple hue are believed to reduce signs of aging, risk of cancer and damage to DNA.

The research around beans is similarly encouraging. A 2019 study published by the Latin American Society of Nutrition noted that antioxidants in common beans reduced cardiovascular risk and chronic disease. And a 2003 study published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* noted that black beans contained 10 times more antioxidants than an equivalent serving size of oranges. In other words, access to antioxidant-rich foods is possible at every price point.

ARE SUPPLEMENTS TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

If antioxidants are so great, should we also add them to our diet via supplements?

"Although it would be nice to pop a supplement and get all the touted benefits of antioxidants, the research just doesn't support their use," says Whipkey. "It seems to be the whole package of fruits, veggies and whole grains, which contain antioxidants, minerals [and] fiber."

Middleton agrees. "Antioxidant supplements can be useful for those with deficiencies or who are unable to get enough nutrients through their diet," she says. "However, it is best for people to obtain these vital nutrients from natural food sources whenever possible."

Depending on which antioxidant you're hoping to get more of—and why—supplements may be something to speak to your doctor about.

A 2012 systematic review of more than 70 trials carried out with nearly 300,000 participants found antioxidant supplements to be largely ineffective. The review also found that, in some instances, antioxidant supplements were detrimental to health. The reasons for this are not yet fully understood. However, at high concentrations, antioxidants have been found to reduce the benefits of exercise and accelerate lung cancer progression in mice.

MAXIMIZE ANTIOXIDANT BENEFITS BY EATING PLENTY OF FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND WHOLE GRAINS.

While animal studies can offer us a glimpse into the effects certain nutrients may have, until there are human studies to back these claims, we can't be sure the same effect will be seen in the human body. However, since in excess quantities, antioxidants—including vitamin C—can also become tissue-damaging "pro-oxidants," restraint is both advised and necessary.

Additionally, a 2019 study published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* found that taking antioxidant supplements while undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer is potentially harmful. The study did note that the same did not apply to multivitamin supplements, which neither increased nor decreased cancer risk.

Both Whipkey and Middleton believe we should view our antioxidant intake as a marathon rather than a sprint—their benefits are best experienced over time, through consistent effort. "Most people are going to benefit from any intake of any antioxidant, especially in the form of whole plant foods," says Whipkey. "However, it seems to be a cumulative effect of antioxidants, fiber, minerals and more that helps prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and cancers." ●

THE ANTIOXIDANTS IN LEAFY GREENS HAVE BEEN LINKED TO IMPROVED COGNITION AND SLOWER MEMORY LOSS.

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THE HEALTHY AGING FACTOR

Age-related cognitive decline and mood disorders affect millions of Americans. Research suggests that a diet rich in antioxidants could help.

BY ASHLEY ABRAMSON

Aging, in general, comes with some big changes—your hair may turn silver, your skin could wrinkle, and you may feel less steady on your feet the more years you log. While certain processes are inherent to getting older, there's some good news: A growing body of research suggests that what you do when you're younger can improve your quality of life as you age.

Some of the most common changes people encounter with age happen in the brain. Take the issue of memory loss. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the greatest risk factor for dementia—a term used to describe the impaired ability to think, remember and make decisions—is age. Alzheimer's disease is the most common kind of dementia, accounting for up to 80 percent of cases.

Scientists are still uncovering the exact cause of cognitive problems that are known to occur with age, but recent research suggests that a process called oxidative stress may play an important role. According to a 2020 review published in *Frontiers in Neuroscience,* many studies have demonstrated "intimate links between oxidative stress and cognitive dysfunction during aging and age-associated neuronal diseases."

While there's no known cure for age-related cognitive decline, researchers believe antioxidant intake may have a protective effect on the brain as people age. Here's what you need to know about antioxidants and your brain, including how to protect your memory (and your mood) from the effects of oxidative stress as you get older.

ANTIOXIDANTS AND BRAIN HEALTH

Free radicals are unstable molecules in the body that can contribute to memory and mood problems. Environmental sources, such as air pollution, cigarette smoke and alcohol, can also create free radicals in your body. The extra oxygen molecule in free radicals contributes to a process called oxidative stress, which can damage cells and trigger disease. Research suggests the brain is particularly vulnerable to oxidative stress and that free radicals may be partly to blame for diseases that affect it, such as Alzheimer's.

Antioxidants—such as vitamins A, C and E; selenium; and compounds called carotenoids and flavonoids—are substances that can help prevent cell damage caused by free radicals. Found primarily in plants, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts, antioxidants can in turn prevent disease processes in the brain.

A 2020 analysis published in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* concluded that antioxidants can target free radicals in the brain, "combating oxidative stress associated with neurodegenerative diseases." According to a 2022 study in *Neurology,* people with higher antioxidant concentration in their blood also have a lower dementia risk. Specifically, the cognitive score of people who ate more flavonoids—compounds found in onions, berries, red wine and more—declined more slowly per decade than people who ate few flavonoids.

Different types of antioxidants work in different ways, says Marie Fanelli Kuczmarski, professor emerita in behavioral health and nutrition at the University of Delaware and a nutrition scientist at the National Institute on Aging. They can limit the production of free radicals or, once they're produced, make them less toxic to the body and brain.

In the brain, antioxidants can slow cell damage caused by free radicals so cells can better communicate with one another to help you think clearly. Take Alzheimer's, for example. In the brain, neurons send messages to one another to ensure good cognition. Cell injury can result in a buildup of plaque in the brain, which has been shown to increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease. "With oxidative stress,

REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CAN INCREASE NATURAL ANTIOXIDANT PRODUCTION.

we have damage to cells by free radicals, so our cell structures are impaired," says Kuczmarski. "Antioxidants come in and help keep the cells intact."

Oxidative stress has also been linked to mood disorders such as depression and anxiety. In some research, patients with major depression were noted to have decreased levels of plasma ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and vitamin E. A 2018 animal study found that resveratrol, an antioxidant in grapes, red wine and peanuts, may be an effective treatment for depression. A 2018 paper also links oxidative stress with the development of anxiety disorders.

Several studies have shown that diet and nutrition play a significant role in the prevention and management of depression and anxiety. For example, increased consumption of antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables has been correlated with lower risk of depression and psychological distress.

"Increasing intake of plant antioxidants has been shown to result in improved mood in multiple populations, from an improved mood after a single blueberry shake rich in flavonoids to daily green tea polyphenols," says Melinda Ring, M.D., executive director of the Osher Center for Integrative Health at Northwestern University and clinical associate professor of medicine at Northwestern

University Feinberg School of Medicine.

At a biochemical level, negative changes in the functions of free radicals and antioxidant enzyme defense systems were associated with the onset of depression, and there were more lipid peroxidation products (a marker of oxidative stress) in patients with severe depression. Overall studies suggest that including antioxidants in a healthy diet and minimizing toxins that create oxidative stress (such as pollution, smoking and pesticides) can benefit mood.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN

If you've visited a pharmacy or health-food store recently, you've probably seen one of the many antioxidant supplements—vitamins A, C and E, to name a few—on the market. While some health care providers may recommend supplementing for certain health conditions, the National Institutes of Health encourages caution with antioxidant supplements. At present, there's not enough research to understand how effective they are or the associated medical risks.

Instead, focus on lifestyle changes that may help reduce the effects of oxidative stress on your brain, starting with increasing the antioxidants in the food you eat. According to Seattle-based registered dietitian nutritionist Ginger Hultin, author of the e-book *Anti-Inflammatory Plant-Based Eating 101,* antioxidants do not have recommended intakes, so there are no guidelines to determine whether you're getting enough in your diet. The best plan is to eat a well-rounded, plant-based diet. "Antioxidants are plentiful in fruits and vegetables, so having a diet rich in a variety of produce is the key to getting adequate amounts," she says.

To boost your antioxidant levels, Hultin recommends finding new ways to add fruits and vegetables to what you already eat. "Add a side of fruit to breakfast, or some frozen spinach or cauliflower rice to a casserole, pasta sauce or an omelet," she says. Whole grains and nuts are also rich in antioxidants, and you can easily get more into your diet by replacing white rice and pasta with farro, barley or brown rice. Add nuts and seeds to snacks, too: "Try a handful of walnuts, pistachios or almonds, or sprinkle chia, hemp or flax seeds on yogurt or hot cereal," Hultin suggests.

Keep in mind that simply adding more antioxidants to your diet won't guarantee your brain is protected from the effects of inflammation and oxidative stress. Kuczmarski says working more nutrients into your diet can sometimes mean more calories, which can lead to weight gain. Because obesity is associated with inflammation, she suggests swapping less-nutritious foods for antioxidant-rich ones. "Ask yourself, 'What am I eating that's not as healthy? Can I swap pastries and soda out for fruits and vegetables?'" Don't stress about buying fresh produce all the time—frozen or canned options can work well if you're busy or on a budget. Just be mindful of potentially unhealthy additions, such as sugar and salt.

Similarly, as you rethink how your diet may be impacting your brain, add in other lifestyle practices known to stave off inflammation. Moderate exercise and an active lifestyle have been demonstrated to be useful in the prevention of oxidative stress and in protection against neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's disease. Strenuous and excessive exercise, especially in untrained individuals, can lead to an increase in oxidative stress. If you're used to a more sedentary lifestyle, ramp up to regular activity gradually. "When you're moving, you are bringing blood and nutrients and oxygen to the brain, including antioxidants," Kuczmarski says. "The more active you are, the better it is for cognitive decline." Stress reduction and proper sleep habits have also been associated with brain health.

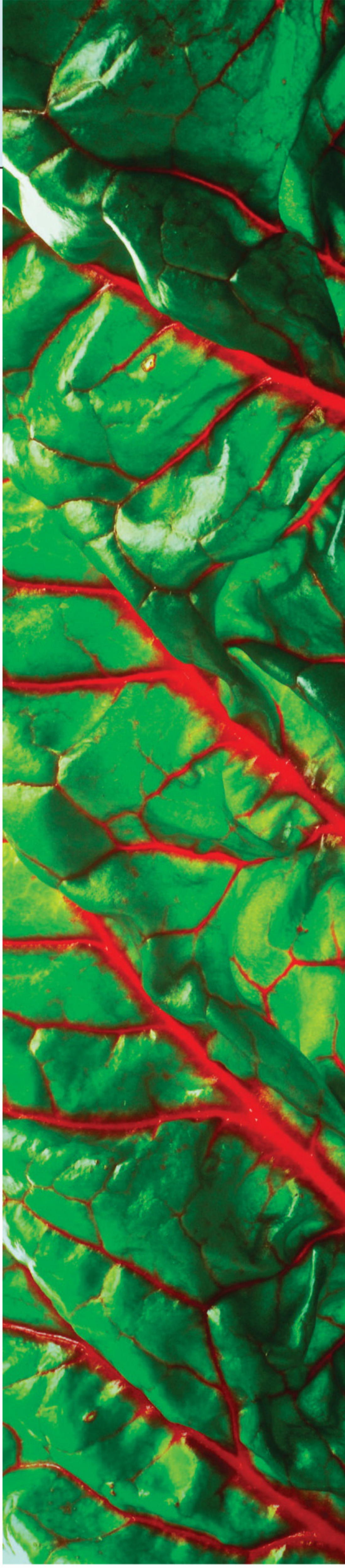
Studies have shown that diet and nutrition play a significant role in the prevention and management of depression and anxiety.

The thought of getting older can be overwhelming. Or, age may seem so distant that you may not think much about your golden years. But no matter how old you are, you're not without agency when it comes to your brain's well-being. Now is the perfect time to begin routines that can protect you for years to come. "Remember that what you do in your 30s, 40s and 50s will hit you in your 70s and 80s," says Kuczmarski. "The healthier you are at those [younger] ages, the healthier you can be when you are up in age." ●

The News on Nitrates

You've heard that some nitrates in food are good for you—but you thought they were harmful. What's the deal?

BY KRISTIN KIRKPATRICK, M.S., RDN



Nitrates in cured meats, such as bacon, hot dogs and cold cuts, have long had a bad rap. But more recently there's been a lot of talk about the health benefits of nitrates in beets and other vegetables. Confusing? Yep. But we'll straighten it out for you.

WHAT ARE NITRATES?

Nitrates are compounds made up of nitrogen and oxygen. Most come from plants, such as leafy greens, beets and celery. They are also added to processed meats—in the form of sodium nitrate or sodium nitrite—as preservatives, or to enhance flavor, color and texture.

THE GOOD

When we eat nitrates from plants, our body converts them to nitric oxide, which has been shown to have a number of benefits, such as regulating blood pressure and improving circulation. This, in turn, can boost both heart health and athletic performance. For example, a 2021 study found that active adult men who received nitrates derived from beet juice increased their muscle-power output. Another trial showed that consuming at least 60 milligrams of nitrates from vegetables daily (that's about what you get from 1 cup of raw green leafy vegetables) may significantly reduce the risk for heart disease. In addition, nitrate-rich plants provide "many other health-promoting nutrients, including antioxidants and potential anti-inflammatory compounds," explains New York City culinary nutritionist Jackie Newgent, RDN, CDN.

THE BAD

So why are they a good thing in beets but not in bacon? In processed-meat products, nitrates can combine with the proteins' amino acids and form nitrosamines, which have been associated with an increased risk of certain cancers. A World Health Organization report found that each 50-gram portion of processed meat a person ate per day (that's about five slices of bacon) upped their odds of colorectal cancer by 18 percent. The evidence is strong enough that WHO classifies these foods as Group 1 carcinogens—the same designation tobacco gets. Consuming plenty of vitamin C and other antioxidant-rich foods can help block the production of nitrosamines and offset the potentially negative effects of processed meats, explains Melina Jampolis, M.D., an internist and board-certified nutrition specialist in Los Angeles. In fact, manufacturers are starting to add vitamin C to cured meats for

just this reason. High heat can also contribute to nitrosamine formation, so Jampolis recommends cooking processed meats at lower temperatures. (For example, microwaving bacon may be better than frying it, according to some research.) But your best bet is to simply reduce the amount you eat. And that goes for foods labeled “natural” or “nitrate-free,” too. Studies show that the conversion of nitrates to nitrosamines can occur regardless of whether they’re organic or synthetic, so that “natural” hot dog may not be any healthier for you. As for products boasting “no added nitrates,” Jampolis says these are often made with celery powder, which contains naturally occurring nitrates and can still produce nitrosamines (although it is not considered an added nitrate).

THE BOTTOM LINE
Nitrates from plants and those added to meat behave very differently in the body. Increasing your consumption of nitrate-rich veggies may reduce your blood pressure and improve athletic performance. But it’s best to limit your intake of processed meats (even “natural” and “nitrate-free” kinds), which are associated with an increased risk of cancer. ●

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EAT FOR HEALTHY SKIN

Antioxidants are used in serums and moisturizers to address signs of sun damage. They may help slow elements of aging from within, too.

BY DEANNA PAI

Most people know by now that a balanced, nutritious diet is good for your body, skin included. It can influence everything from the wrinkles on your face to the arteries in your heart, affecting your overall health on just about every level. That's why what you eat can have such an impact on your complexion in particular. Studies have linked vitamin C deficiency to delayed wound healing and low levels of vitamin D to atopic dermatitis, the most common type of eczema. Your diet can go so far as to impact aging in the body, even slowing the development of wrinkles and skin laxity.

Skin ages in two ways: intrinsically and extrinsically. "Intrinsic or chronological aging is an endogenous, age-related physiologic process," says Katalin Ferenczi, M.D., a dermatologist and professor at the University of Connecticut. In other words, intrinsic aging mostly results from the passage of time, hence "chronological" aging.

On the other hand, Ferenczi says, "extrinsic

THE VITAMIN C IN ORANGES HELPS SYNTHESIZE COLLAGEN, IMPROVING SKIN HEALTH.

aging refers to premature skin aging related to environmental factors, such as exposure to ultraviolet light, smoking and pollution." That's where many topical skin care products, such as broad-spectrum sunscreen and antioxidant serums, can be particularly helpful, since they neutralize the damage that contributes to extrinsic aging.

The respective damage can show itself a little differently on the skin. "Intrinsic aging presents as wrinkling, dullness, dryness, laxity with decreased elasticity and volume, and thinning of the skin," says Ferenczi. Extrinsic aging can also manifest as wrinkles and fine lines but is accompanied by dark spots and hyperpigmentation.

Unlike extrinsic aging, much of intrinsic aging is out of your control. "Intrinsic skin aging is dependent on chronological, genetic and ethnic factors," explains Ferenczi. "It is the result of complex processes that lead to structural and functional changes in the skin over time." That includes the breakdown of collagen and elastin fibers (which basically serve as the scaffolding within skin), chronic low-grade inflammation and DNA damage. "Most of these changes are triggered by oxidative stress," she says.

And oxidative stress is one aspect of intrinsic aging over which you do have some leverage—to a certain extent. That begs the question: What's oxidative stress? First, it helps to understand free radicals and their role. You might have already heard of these unstable molecules in terms of sun damage: When sunlight hits skin, free radicals form and can harm the skin, damaging DNA, destroying collagen and creating discoloration.

But when we're talking about intrinsic aging, we're talking about reactive oxygen species—one of many types of free radicals—that actually originate within the body, usually as a by-product of normal cellular activities. "In order to counteract the deleterious effects of reactive oxygen species, the skin has an antioxidant defense mechanism that helps neutralize them," Ferenczi says. These antioxidants work by stabilizing the reactive oxygen species, putting an end to their damaging run and helping to keep them in check.

However, antioxidants aren't invincible—nor will they remain at the same levels forever. In fact, "over time, and with certain medical conditions, our body's ability to generate these antioxidants decreases," says Jamie Zussman, M.D., a dermatologist and professor at the University of Utah.

As part of the natural aging process, "excessive production of reactive oxygen species and diminished antioxidant capacity can overwhelm the skin's antioxidant system—and this imbalance results in oxidative stress," Ferenczi says. That, in turn, contributes to a spike in the production of inflammatory mediators and cellular damage. Oxidative stress can also make it all the way to your skin: When reactive oxygen species are formed, they enter the bloodstream, which eventually shuttles them along to the blood-vessel-rich skin.

Once they're there, the oxidative stress can do a number on your skin from head to toe. "Accumulations of reactive oxygen species within the skin can lead to alterations in gene expression and cell death," says Zussman. "There are numerous skin diseases that have associations with internal diseases, and the formation of reactive oxygen species may be one factor in this association." A 2021 review in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* concluded that high levels of reactive oxygen species in skin may contribute to contact dermatitis, psoriasis, acne and skin cancer, among other conditions.

To offset the natural (and inevitable) nosedive of antioxidants, it's possible to replenish your body's stockpile. "The idea behind antioxidant supplementation is that it can support the body in its fight against reactive oxygen species when its intrinsic abilities cannot keep up with the increased production," says Zussman.

One winning way to get more antioxidants is through your diet. By doing so, research suggests, you may be able to better protect your skin from intrinsic aging—and even some skin diseases. For instance, one large 2019 study published in *JAMA Dermatology* followed more 100,000 people over the course of 25 years and found that higher overall intake of vitamin A, which is found in foods such as bell peppers and carrots, was associated with a lower incidence of skin cancer.

And anecdotally, dietitians have found that tweaking one's diet can indeed translate to healthier, more youthful skin. "I've worked with many patients who struggled with eczema, dermatitis and even psoriasis and found that an anti-inflammatory diet greatly improved and sometimes resolved their skin issues," says Michelle Babb, M.S., RD, a registered dietitian in Seattle and the author of *Anti-Inflammatory Eating Made Easy.*

When it comes to supplementing the body's own store of antioxidants, the thinking is that the more types of antioxidants you have, the merrier. "Overall, results have shown that specific combinations of antioxidants outperform high doses of single ingredients," says Zussman. "Many antioxidants, such as vitamin C and vitamin E, work together synergistically to increase their beneficial effects." Speaking of which, vitamin C has proved particularly powerful, both topically and orally. Also known as l-ascorbic acid, vitamin C is "a direct scavenger of reactive oxygen species and a very strong natural antioxidant with potent anti-aging properties," says Ferenczi. "It has several benefits to the skin, as it has anti-inflammatory effects, helps the synthesis of collagen and elastin fibers, and prevents hyperpigmentation."

Kale is loaded with lutein and zeaxanthin, two antioxidants that, according to research, can boost your skin's elasticity and hydration.

The best way to get antioxidants is through eating whole foods versus swallowing a pill. "High doses of only one ingredient may not be helpful and could even be harmful, especially in an aging body where the liver and kidney are not be performing as they once were," says Zussman. (There's a word for this: hypervitaminosis, in which you take so many vitamins that they pose a health risk.)

Eating multiple antioxidants in one meal helps you reap the most benefits. "Most of these studies have used different formulations of antioxidants, and it is clear that not all oral antioxidant combinations are created equal," says Zussman.

Ultimately, if you're compelled to incorporate more antioxidants into your diet, that's a good thing, since most people could benefit from the uptick. "The average American does not reach the recommended level of fruit and vegetable intake, for example, and fruits and vegetables are very rich in antioxidants," says Lauri Wright, Ph.D., associate professor at the University of North Florida and the president-elect of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. "We recommend more of a plant-based diet that's rich in fruits and vegetables, with at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day." So how do you incorporate more antioxidants in your diet in a healthy, balanced way? We asked the experts to share their science-backed methods of doing just that.

FIND THE ANTIOXIDANTS

While "eat the rainbow" may sound like a cliché at this point, it's enduring advice for a reason. "You want to eat a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables to get that symphony of antioxidants," says Wright. That's because the pigments of those foods can indicate various antioxidants.

For instance, beta carotene (which is converted by the body into vitamin A) is the yellow-orange antioxidant that gives carrots and bell peppers their hue. Kale is loaded with lutein and zeaxanthin, two antioxidants that, according to research published in the journal *Clinics in Dermatology*, can boost your skin's elasticity and hydration.

THINK BEYOND THE VITAMINS

While vitamins tend to get top billing—and for good reason—you shouldn't stop there. Other compounds, such as polyphenols and minerals, can be beneficial as well. "They aren't vitamins, but they have powerful health benefits by being antioxidants," says Wright.

Babb recommends sticking with the acronym ACES, for vitamins A, C and E and selenium, a mineral found in animal protein and beans. "There are also phytonutrients that are potent antioxidants, such as polyphenols found in green tea, quercetin found in onions and apples, and curcuminoids found in turmeric," she says. "So the best way to think about getting these antioxidants through diet is to eat a wide variety of whole foods, especially colorful vegetables, fruits, herbs and spices."

Find ways to weave various spices into your meals whenever possible, such as with fresh or dried herbs and garlic, says Babb. For instance, you can "make an easy dressing or marinade with olive oil, grated turmeric, fresh-squeezed lemon, garlic and black pepper, which helps increase the bioavailability of the turmeric," she says. "Use it to sauté veggies or as a salad dressing."

SNEAK THEM IN

Wright recommends incorporating the concept of nutrient density into your diet—quality over quantity. For breakfast, for instance, consider "a smoothie, where you can mix a variety of fruit and even some kale or spinach into a really nutrient- and antioxidant-packed drink that could go along with your eggs," she says. She's also a fan of sneaking more vegetables into meals. "We talk about that a lot with kids, but it works with adults," she says. "So if you're making a meatloaf, put some carrots in there—after it's all cooked, you'll hardly even notice it. But that's another bonus of vegetables for you."

START SMALL

If you're new to the fruits and vegetables game, it's fine to start slow. Make small, achievable changes and then evaluate how you're doing in one or two months. It also helps to adjust your expectations accordingly. "You can't rebuild an entire building in just a few days," Wright says. She recommends identifying one or two goals that are doable so you can enjoy the wins. After that, "they can become permanent changes, rather than just 'I'm going on this diet to do this.'" Try setting a goal to eat an apple once a day, perhaps, or to add spinach

Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Cider Vinaigrette at eatingwell.com/roastedbrussels

Roasted Grape & Radicchio Salad at eatingwell.com/grapesalad

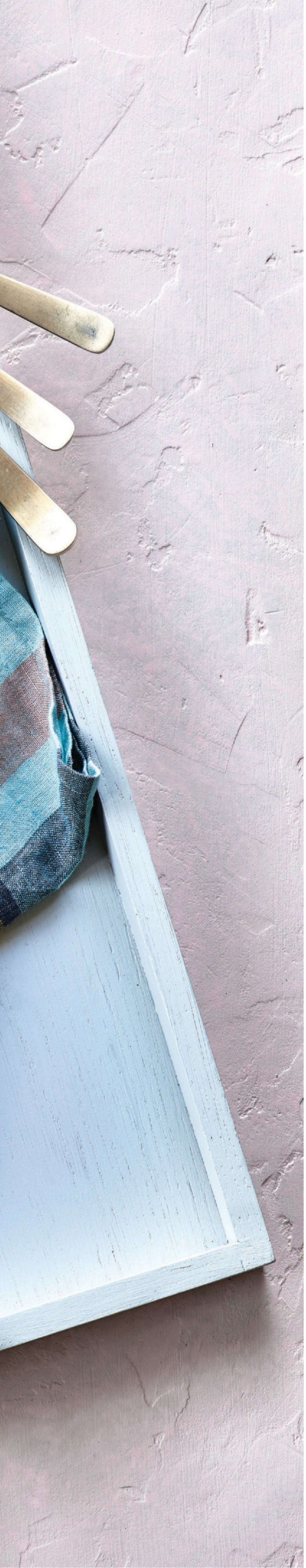
to your morning scramble. After all, "when we're talking about aging and antioxidants, we're not talking about something temporary to fix a long-term issue," Wright says. "We're talking about a way of life. So [you're] not trying to do too much at one time—just little, bite-size changes that you can stick with for a lifetime."

FOCUS ON ADDING, NOT TAKING AWAY

Few people succeed with rules and restrictions, especially on a long-term basis. As a result, "the emphasis should be on incorporating healthy, antioxidant-rich foods versus eliminating foods or entire food groups from the diet," says Atlanta dietitian Karen Wood, RD. "Finding foods that people enjoy is very important. There is a higher success rate when the focus is on what they can have versus what they can't have."

ENJOY YOURSELF

Green tea, dark chocolate, cocoa and red wine are all great for the skin. These treats are rich in antioxidants and high in polyphenols, and they have been shown to increase skin density, elasticity and circulation. That's proof that eating your way to healthier, smoother and all-around more youthful skin can be not only easy but enjoyable, too. ●



Recipes for Healthy Aging

As we get older, we made need more of all kinds of antioxidants. The delicious recipes here pack in these essential nutrients.

REVIEWED BY VICTORIA SEAVER, M.S., RD

Farro Salad with Grilled Chicken

ACTIVE: 40 min **TOTAL:** 40 min

TO MAKE AHEAD: Prepare through Step 4 and refrigerate for up to 1 day.

Enjoy the flavors of the season with this summer farro salad. This dish is also great with wheat or rye berries instead of farro: Skip the toasting step and cook in a pot of simmering water until tender, about 50 minutes. If your celery doesn't have any leaves on it, use fresh parsley instead.

1	**cup farro**
1½	**cups water**
1¼	**pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed**
1	**tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil plus ¼ cup, divided**
1¼	**teaspoons kosher salt, divided**
5	**tablespoons white-wine vinegar**
1	**teaspoon crushed red pepper**
½	**teaspoon ground pepper**
1	**large red bell pepper, coarsely chopped**
2	**stalks celery, sliced, plus ½ cup packed celery leaves, coarsely chopped**
⅓	**cup thinly sliced red onion**
½	**cup sliced almonds, toasted**

1. Preheat grill to medium-high.

2. Toast farro in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, shaking the pan occasionally, until very fragrant, 3 to 4 minutes. Add water and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to maintain a simmer, cover and cook until tender, 15 to 17 minutes. Drain and rinse under cold water until cool.

3. Meanwhile, cut chicken in half or thirds horizontally so the pieces are no more than ½ inch thick. Brush with 1 tablespoon oil and season with ¼ teaspoon salt. Grill the chicken, flipping once, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part registers 165°F, about 7 minutes total. Transfer the chicken to a clean cutting board and let cool for 5 minutes. Slice the chicken.

4. Whisk vinegar, crushed red pepper and ground pepper with the remaining ¼ cup oil and 1 teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Add bell pepper, celery, celery leaves, onion, the farro and the chicken; stir to combine.

5. Just before serving, sprinkle with almonds.

SERVES 6: 1 CUP EACH

CAL 378 **FAT** 19G (SAT 2.6G) **CHOL** 52MG **CARBS** 28G **TOTAL SUGARS** 3G **PROTEIN** 25G **FIBER** 5G **SODIUM** 462MG **POTASSIUM** 352MG **CALCIUM** 62MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 48MG **FOLATE** 32MCG **VITAMIN A** 1476IU **VITAMIN C** 43MG

Roasted Salmon with Spicy Cranberry Relish

ACTIVE: 30 min **TOTAL:** 30 min

This ruby-red cranberry relish recipe gets a refreshing crunch from apple and celery. It's also delightful alongside a roast chicken or pork loin.

- **2½ pounds skin-on salmon fillet**
- **2 cloves garlic, chopped**
- **1½ teaspoons kosher salt, divided**
- **½ teaspoon whole black peppercorns, cracked**
- **1 lemon, zested and cut into wedges**
- **2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- **2 teaspoons Dijon mustard**
- **2 cups cranberries, fresh or frozen (8 ounces)**
- **1 small shallot, minced**
- **1 serrano pepper, seeded**
- **1 medium Granny Smith apple, peeled and finely diced**
- **1 stalk celery, finely diced**
- **1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar**
- **2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, divided**

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. Place salmon on the prepared sheet. Mash garlic, 1 teaspoon salt, peppercorns and lemon zest into a paste with a fork or a mortar and pestle. Transfer to a small bowl and stir in 1 tablespoon oil and mustard. Spread on the salmon. Bake until the flesh flakes easily with a fork, 10 to 15 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, pulse cranberries, shallot and serrano in a food processor until finely chopped. Transfer to a medium bowl and stir in apple, celery, vinegar, 1 tablespoon parsley and the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and ½ teaspoon salt.

4. Sprinkle the salmon with the remaining 1 tablespoon parsley and serve with the relish and lemon wedges.

SERVES 8: 4 OZ. SALMON AND ⅓ CUP RELISH EACH

CAL 229 **FAT** 9G (SAT 2G) **CHOL** 66MG **CARBS** 8G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G **PROTEIN** 29G **FIBER** 2G **SODIUM** 453MG **POTASSIUM** 603MG **CALCIUM** 65MG **IRON** 1MG **MAGNESIUM** 45MG **FOLATE** 21MCG **VITAMIN A** 371IU **VITAMIN C** 10MG

Homemade Chicken Tenders with Everything Bagel Seasoning over Salad

ACTIVE: 25 min **TOTAL:** 25 min

Bagel seasoning is a quick way to season and add extra crunch to breadcrumbs for chicken tenders. You can also sprinkle the seasoning blend over baked fish or sautéed vegetables, or make everything bagel–seasoned avocado toast.

- **2 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **1 large egg**
- **½ cup panko breadcrumbs, preferably whole-wheat**
- **1 tablespoon everything bagel seasoning**
- **1 pound chicken tenders**
- **¼ cup grapeseed or canola oil**
- **2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- **1 tablespoon white-wine vinegar**
- **1 teaspoon Dijon mustard**
- **1 teaspoon honey**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground pepper**
- **5 ounces mixed baby greens**

1. Place flour in a shallow dish and lightly beat egg in another shallow dish. Mix breadcrumbs and everything bagel seasoning in a third shallow dish. Dredge chicken tenders in flour, then egg, then breadcrumbs.

2. Heat grapeseed (or canola) oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and cook, turning once, until golden brown and an instant-read thermometer registers 165°F, about 7 minutes total, adjusting the heat as needed to prevent burning.

3. Whisk olive oil, vinegar, mustard, honey and pepper in a large bowl. Add greens and toss to coat. Serve the greens topped with the chicken.

SERVES 4: 3 OZ. CHICKEN & 2 CUPS SALAD EACH
CAL 394 **FAT** 25G (SAT 3G) **CHOL** 109MG **CARBS** 14G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G **PROTEIN** 27G **FIBER** 1G **SODIUM** 402MG **POTASSIUM** 338MG **CALCIUM** 49MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 36MG **FOLATE** 62MCG **VITAMIN A** 1048IU **VITAMIN C** 6MG

Arugula, Chicken & Melon Salad with Sumac Dressing

ACTIVE: 20 min **TOTAL:** 20 min

Sweet and savory find harmony in this salad dotted with ripe melon and tossed in a lemony dressing. Melon balls are so adorable, but making them leaves some fruit behind—whir those leftovers into a smoothie.

¼ cup lemon juice
1 teaspoon ground sumac, plus more for garnish
1 teaspoon honey
1 clove garlic, grated
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
5 ounces baby arugula (8 cups)
2 cups shredded cooked chicken breast (about 12 ounces)
2 cups cantaloupe balls (from 1 small melon)
4 ounces feta cheese, preferably sheep's-milk, crumbled
1 cup fresh mint leaves, torn
¼ cup pine nuts, toasted

Whisk lemon juice, sumac, honey, garlic and salt in a large bowl. Gradually whisk in oil until combined. Add arugula, chicken, melon, feta and mint. Toss to coat with the dressing. Sprinkle with pine nuts and garnish with additional sumac, if desired.

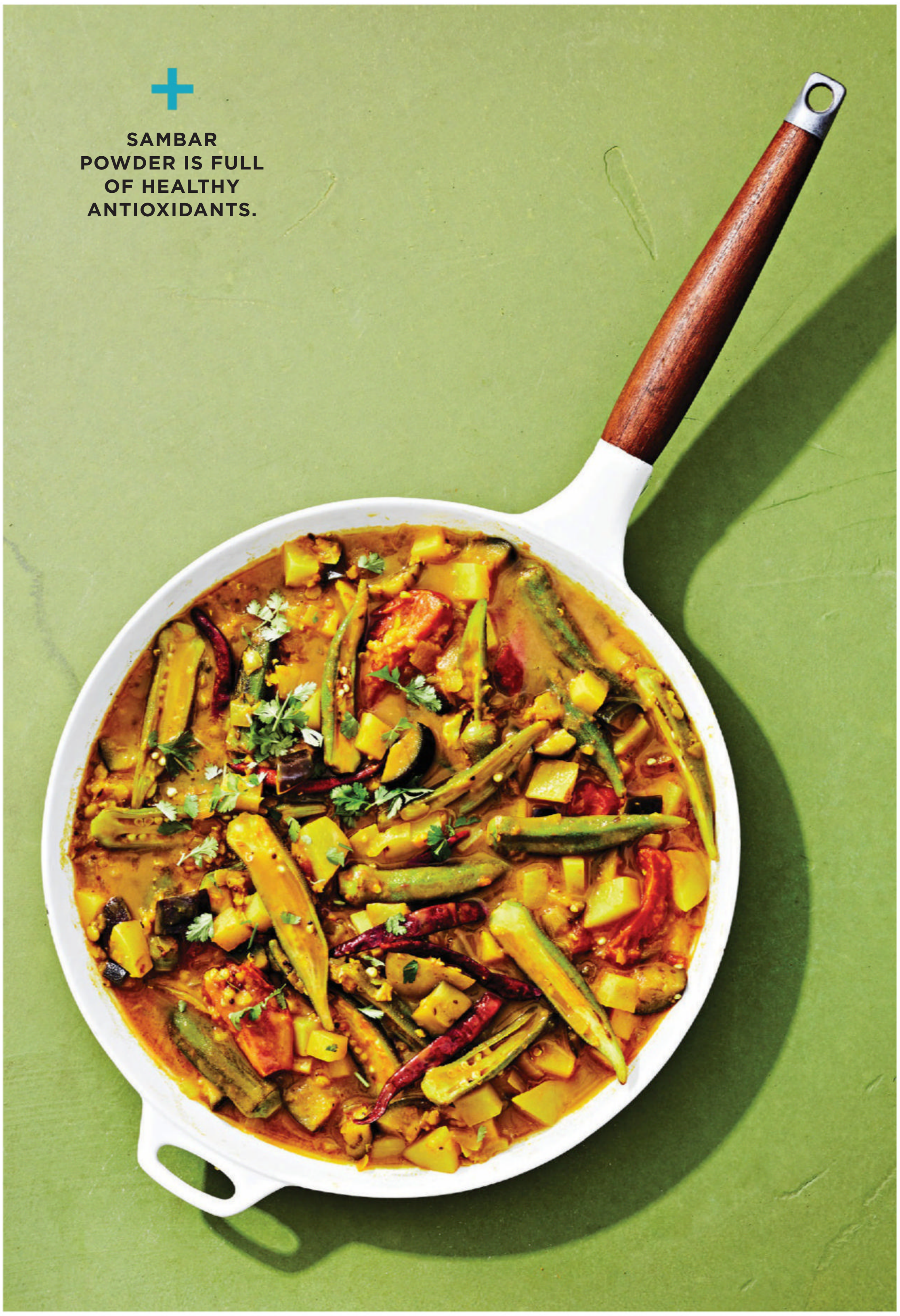
SERVES 4: 2½ CUPS EACH
CAL 453 **FAT** 29G (SAT 7G) **CHOL** 108MG **CARBS** 15G **TOTAL SUGARS** 10G **PROTEIN** 33G **FIBER** 3G **SODIUM** 489MG **POTASSIUM** 959MG **NIACIN EQUIVALENTS** 13MG **VITAMIN A** 4908IU

Yellow Split Pea Sambar with Turnip, Eggplant & Okra

ACTIVE: 35 min **TOTAL:** 1 hr

In Kerala, in southern India, this stew can be eaten at just about every meal. It's typically enjoyed for breakfast with idli (steamed rice cakes) or dosa (rice crepes). For lunch and dinner, it's eaten with steamed rice and fish curry or braised beef dishes. Sambar powder is a mixture that includes coriander, fenugreek, cumin, black peppercorns, red chiles and asafetida. Find it at Indian markets or online.

3	**tablespoons ghee, divided**
1	**teaspoon cumin seeds**
1	**teaspoon ground turmeric**
1	**large onion, chopped**
2	**cloves garlic, smashed**
4	**cups water, divided**
½	**cup yellow split peas (toover dal) or red lentils**
1¼	**teaspoons kosher salt, divided**
2	**large plum tomatoes, quartered**
1	**cup diced Yukon Gold potatoes**
1	**cup diced turnip**
1	**cup diced eggplant, preferably Japanese**
12	**okra pods, halved lengthwise**
1	**tablespoon sambar powder (see above)**
1	**teaspoon tamarind paste**
1	**teaspoon brown mustard seeds**
6	**dried whole red chiles**
½	**cup chopped fresh cilantro**



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SAMBAR POWDER IS FULL OF HEALTHY ANTIOXIDANTS.

1. Heat a large pot over medium heat. Add 1 tablespoon ghee and cumin seeds. Cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add turmeric and onion and cook, stirring, until the onion is translucent, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add 3 cups water, split peas (or lentils) and 1 teaspoon salt; stir. Bring to a boil. Cover and reduce heat to medium low. Cook until the split peas (or lentils) are soft but still hold their shape, 20 to 25 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add 1 tablespoon ghee, then add tomatoes, potatoes, turnip, eggplant, okra and sambar powder. Stir in tamarind paste; mix well. Add the remaining 1 cup water and ¼ teaspoon salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until almost all the liquid has evaporated, about 15 minutes (the vegetables don't have to be cooked through).

3. Add the vegetable mixture to the pot. Cook, uncovered and stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes. Remove from heat.

4. Heat a small skillet over medium-high heat. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon ghee, mustard seeds and chiles. Cook until the mustard seeds start to pop, 30 to 60 seconds. Pour the mixture into the sambar. Stir in cilantro.

SERVES 6: ABOUT 1 CUP EACH
CAL 190 **FAT** 8G (SAT 5G) **CHOL** 20MG
CARBS 25G **TOTAL SUGARS** 5G
PROTEIN 6G **FIBER** 8G **SODIUM** 433MG
VITAMIN A 693IU

CHAPTER

2

Best Foods to Eat

So many foods, especially fruits and vegetables, tout antioxidant benefits. These pages explore the delicious specifics behind how certain foods keep you healthy.

Tomato Ricotta Tart at
eatingwell.com/tomatotart

POWERHOUSE PICKS

These delicious foods have high levels of antioxidant compounds. Plus, how to work more of them into your meal rotation.

BY ANDREA MATHIS, M.A., RDN, LD

DARK CHOCOLATE

There are several health benefits associated with incorporating dark chocolate into your daily diet regimen, thanks to the plentiful amount of flavonoids it contains. Flavonoids are plant compounds that act as antioxidants and may play a role in cancer prevention and heart health. Research suggests the flavonoids in dark chocolate help the body produce nitric oxide, which causes a decrease in blood pressure.

When selecting a dark chocolate, choose one that contains 70% cacao or higher. Bars that have a higher percentage of cacao are richer in flavonoids and also tend to contain less sugar.

There's no shortage of ways to enjoy dark chocolate. Try adding a few pieces of it to your bowl of overnight oats or using it to make a tasty chocolate hummus.

Steamed Artichokes with Herb Aioli at eatingwell.com/artichokes

ARTICHOKES

Artichokes are best known for their delicious role in dips, pizza and even salads—and they're packed with health benefits. According to the USDA, artichokes contain the highest levels of antioxidants of any vegetable, including polyphenols. Polyphenols are disease-fighting compounds that may help lower your blood sugar levels and reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Studies show that these compounds may also help stimulate the secretion of insulin, a hormone that's needed to transport sugar from your bloodstream into your cells.

When consuming artichokes, keep in mind that both the leaves and the heart can be eaten. Once they're cooked, the outer leaves can be pulled off and dipped in a tasty sauce, such as aioli or herb butter. You can also add artichokes to your favorite casserole or soup recipes.

GOJI BERRIES

Goji berries are known for their bright red hue, and they're packed with antioxidants. These tiny red fruits are native to Asia and have been used in traditional medicine for thousands of years because of their high level of antioxidants, especially zeaxanthin, which benefits eye health. This antioxidant has been linked to several health benefits, such as reducing the risk of age-related macular degeneration, cataracts and glaucoma. It works to protect your eyes by absorbing harmful blue light that might cause severe damage.

Goji berries are often sold powdered or dried and can be added to a bowl of cereal, yogurt or granola. You can also add them to your favorite smoothie or chia pudding recipe.

WALNUTS

Not only do walnuts add a delicious, satisfying crunch to your meal, but they also contain a higher level of antioxidants than any other common nut. These include a combination of plant compounds called polyphenols and vitamin E. Vitamin E acts as a powerful antioxidant in the body and has been linked to a reduced risk of developing coronary artery disease. Studies also show that vitamin E decreases the accumulation of low-density lipoproteins (also known as LDL, or less helpful cholesterol) in the arterial walls, which can result in atherosclerosis.

Vitamin E plays a role in supporting immune health, too, by assisting with T-cell production, which is necessary for a healthy, functioning immune system.

Walnuts can be eaten on their own as a snack, of course, or you might pair them with fresh herbs and olive oil to make a hearty pesto.

KALE

Often labeled as a "superfood," kale is rich in nutrients and loaded with powerful antioxidants, such as quercetin. Like most antioxidants, quercetin helps to fight free radicals. Free radicals are known for wandering around in the body and causing severe cellular damage. Quercetin saves the day by "cleaning up" free radicals so that they can no longer cause damage.

Kale is a great way to add a source of quercetin to your diet. There are several ways to enjoy this hearty vegetable. Try sautéing it with garlic and red chili flakes to pair with seasoned meats, such as lean pork or lamb. You can also try baking the leaves to turn them into crispy kale chips for a healthy snack alternative.

SWEET POTATOES

These popular spuds are tasty and rich in beta carotene, which is the antioxidant responsible for the bright-orange color of their flesh. Beta carotene is converted into vitamin A (retinol), which plays a critical role in cell growth and in maintaining healthy organs like the lungs, heart and kidneys.

Research shows that high blood levels of carotenoids, including beta carotene, may reduce the risk of developing advanced age-related macular degeneration, an eye disease that can blur your central vision. The macula is the part of the eye that controls sharp, clear sight.

Sweet potatoes are endlessly versatile—they can be baked, roasted, grilled, sautéed and fried. Try tossing them in a combination of chili powder and olive oil for a delicious side dish, or load them up with a variety of toppings. Roasted sweet potato adds a hearty element to a fresh green salad.

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4 BENEFITS OF DARK CHOCOLATE

As if you needed another reason to love chocolate, we took a look at the science of why dark chocolate is healthy.

BY JULIA WESTBROOK

You've seen the chocolate-is-healthy headlines—and who wouldn't want to buy into them? Whether it's in, say, a flourless cake or peanut butter crispy rice treats with chocolate and caramel drizzle, chocolate is one of the most delicious and comforting foods. But when we dug into the health benefits of dark chocolate, we set the bar high when combing through the research: nothing funded by chocolate companies and no small, one-off studies without a larger body of research backing them up. Take a look.

1. IT IMPROVES HEART HEALTH

Research published in the *American Heart Journal* found that three to six 1-ounce servings of chocolate a week may reduce the risk of heart failure by 18 percent. Another study, published in the journal *BMJ,* suggests the treat may help prevent atrial fibrillation (a-fib), a condition characterized by irregular heartbeat. People who ate two to six servings a week had a 20 percent lower risk of developing a-fib compared to those who consumed it less than once a month. Researchers believe cocoa's antioxidant properties may help improve blood-vessel function, reduce inflammation and regulate factors of platelet formation that contribute to a healthy heartbeat.

2. IT LOWERS BLOOD PRESSURE

Speaking of your heart, among people with hypertension, daily chocolate consumption helps lower systolic blood pressure (the top number of the reading) by 4 mmHg, according to a recent review of 40 trials. (Not bad, considering that medication typically lowers systolic blood pressure by about 9 mmHg.) The researchers posit that the flavanols signal your body to widen the blood vessels, which in turn lowers blood pressure.

3. IT REDUCES DIABETES RISK

A 2018 study of more than 150,000 people in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that nibbling about 2.5 ounces of chocolate per week was associated with a 10 percent lower risk of type 2 diabetes, even after factoring in the added sugar. Chocolate appears to act as a prebiotic, feeding the beneficial bacteria that live in your microbiome. These good gut bugs produce compounds that improve insulin sensitivity and reduce inflammation.

4. IT BOOSTS MENTAL SHARPNESS

Older adults who reported eating chocolate at least once a week scored higher on a number of cognitive tests compared to those indulging less often, according to a study published in the journal *Appetite.* The researchers pointed to a group of compounds in chocolate called methylxanthines (which include caffeine) that have been shown to improve concentration and mood. A Spanish study found that adults who ate 2.5 ounces of chocolate a week had better scores on tests used to screen for cognitive impairment, such as dementia.

Chocolate Thumbprints

ACTIVE: 40 min
TOTAL: 2 hr 50 min
TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate dough (Steps 1 and 2) for up to 1 day. Let stand at room temperature for 1 hour before continuing. Store cookies airtight at room temperature for up to 2 days.

You can fill these thumbprint cookies with jam or ruby chocolate, a naturally pink chocolate that has a tart, fruity flavor. You can find ruby chocolate (also called ruby cacao or ruby couverture) at some specialty grocery stores, including Trader Joe's and Whole Foods, and online.

½ cup all-purpose flour
⅓ cup rye flour
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon or ginger
½ teaspoon salt
5 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces
8 ounces dark chocolate, coarsely chopped
⅔ cup granulated sugar
2 cold large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
¼ cup turbinado sugar, for rolling
½ cup coarsely chopped ruby chocolate (3 ounces) or raspberry or apricot jam

1. Whisk all-purpose flour, rye flour, cinnamon (or ginger) and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Fit another medium bowl into a pan of gently simmering water—don't let the water touch the bottom of the bowl. Put butter in the bowl, then put dark chocolate on top. Heat, stirring occasionally, until the butter and chocolate are melted. Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in granulated sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, and beat energetically until the mixture is thick and smooth, about 1 minute. Beat in vanilla. Stir in the flour mixture with a flexible spatula until the dry ingredients disappear into the dough. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to 1 day.

3. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats. Put turbinado sugar in a small bowl.

4. Using a scant tablespoon per cookie, roll the dough into balls between your palms. Roll the balls in the sugar to coat. Place the balls on the prepared baking sheets (13 to 15 per pan), giving them 1½ inches or so of room to spread. Make an indentation in the center of each cookie with a wine cork or your thumb.

5. Bake one pan at a time until the cookies feel almost firm, 10 to 12 minutes. Transfer the pan to a wire rack. The indentations will have puffed in the oven, so gently press them down again.

6. If filling the cookies with ruby chocolate, melt it, either in a microwave or in a bowl over simmering water. Using a small spoon, fill each indentation to the brim with chocolate. Put cookies in the fridge for about 10 minutes to set the chocolate.
If filling with jam, stir in a splash of warm water to thin it and then fill the cookies while the jam is still liquid. If the cookies are still warm, let them cool to room temperature before serving.

SERVES 28: 1 COOKIE EACH
CAL 75 **FAT** 3G (SAT 2G) **CHOL** 19MG
CARBS 10G **TOTAL SUGARS** 8G **PROTEIN** 1G
SODIUM 50MG **VITAMIN A** 84IU

Flourless Chocolate Cake with Orange

ACTIVE: 35 min
TOTAL: 3 hr 45 min

This naturally gluten-free cake is rich, fudgy and a showstopper at any party. Serve with fresh fruit for an extra dose of antioxidants.

- 12 ounces 100% cacao chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) plant-based or regular unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- ⅓ cup grapeseed or safflower oil
- Zest of 1 orange
- 1 tablespoon instant espresso powder
- 1 teaspoon pure almond extract
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 6 large eggs, separated
- ⅔ cup granulated sugar plus ¼ cup, divided
- 1 cup almond flour

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Generously coat a 9-inch springform pan with cooking spray.
2. Place chocolate and butter in the top of a double boiler over hot but not boiling water; stir until melted. Remove the top of the pan from the heat and stir in oil, orange zest, espresso powder, almond and vanilla extracts and salt.
3. Whisk egg yolks and ⅔ cup sugar in a large bowl until light and pale, 1 to 2 minutes. Slowly whisk in the chocolate mixture until smooth. Stir in almond flour.
4. Place egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment (or in a large bowl with a hand mixer). Beat the whites on medium-high speed until soft peaks form, about 2 minutes. Reduce speed to medium and slowly add the remaining ¼ cup sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time. Then return to medium-high and beat until stiff and glossy, about 1 minute more.
5. Fold one-third of the whites into the batter until blended. Gently fold in the remaining whites with a flexible spatula, a little at a time, just until blended. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan.
6. Bake until the cake is set around the edges and the top is cracked, 40 to 45 minutes. (The middle may jiggle slightly.) Let cool in the pan on a wire rack for 30 minutes. Run a thin-bladed knife around the edges, then release the sides of the pan. Refrigerate the cake until fully cooled, at least 2 hours, before serving.

SERVES 16: 1 SLICE EACH
CAL 309 **FAT** 26G (SAT 13G) **CHOL** 70MG
CARBS 19G **TOTAL SUGARS** 12G
PROTEIN 7G **FIBER** 4G **SODIUM** 139MG
VITAMIN A 104IU

Mug Brownie

ACTIVE: 5 min **TOTAL:** 15 min

You might want to keep a copy of this recipe in the pantry beside the cocoa for those moments when you crave a chocolaty treat. Cook this fudgy brownie in a mug in the microwave, and it's ready in less than a minute!

- **1 tablespoon coconut oil**
- **2 tablespoons unsweetened coconut milk or low-fat milk**
- **¼ teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **1½ tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **1 tablespoon sugar**
- **1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder**
- **⅛ teaspoon salt**
- **2 teaspoons mini chocolate chips (optional)**

Place coconut oil in a small microwave-safe coffee mug and microwave on high until melted, 15 to 20 seconds. Cool for 1 minute. Whisk in coconut milk (or milk) and vanilla. Add flour, sugar, cocoa and salt; continue whisking until completely incorporated. Stir in chocolate chips, if using. Microwave on high until firm to the touch and no longer glossy, 30 to 40 seconds. Let mug stand for 8 to 10 minutes before eating.

SERVES 1: 1 MUG BROWNIE
CAL 234 **FAT** 15G (SAT 12G) **CARBS** 25G
TOTAL SUGARS 13G (ADDED 13G)
PROTEIN 2G **FIBER** 2G **SODIUM** 292MG
POTASSIUM 101MG **CALCIUM** 22MG
IRON 1MG **MAGNESIUM** 35MG **FOLATE** 26MCG **VITAMIN A** 63IU

THE HEALTHY SCOOP ON SPICES

Herbs and spices add flavor to dishes of all cultures and cuisines. Many bring antioxidants and other healthy nutrients to the table, too.

BY ANDREA MATHIS, M.A., RDN, LD

CINNAMON

Cinnamon is one of the world's most popular spices and is commonly used in a variety of dishes—but did you know that this fragrant spice also packs a hefty healthy punch? Cinnamon contains several potent antioxidants, including polyphenols, that help to reduce free radical damage and slow oxidative stress. Polyphenols have also been linked to helping improve heart health.

Research shows that cinnamon may help increase circulation and improve tissue repair, which may be helpful for regenerating heart tissue to help fight heart disease and stroke. Cinnamon has been linked to helping reduce triglyceride and total cholesterol levels, both of which are risk factors for heart disease.

Cinnamon is versatile and frequently used in sweet and savory dishes. Add a pinch of ground cinnamon to a bowl of popcorn, or put a few cinnamon sticks in warm apple cider.

TURMERIC

Turmeric is a brightly hued spice that is responsible for giving mustard and curry their vibrant coloring. It has been used in many countries for years as both a spice and a medicinal herb due to its active ingredient, curcumin. Curcumin is a potent antioxidant that contains anti-inflammatory properties and has been shown to help reduce symptoms associated with osteoarthritis by inhibiting the production of inflammatory mediators, which typically trigger a pain response.

Studies show that a daily dose of 1 gram of curcumin for 8 to 12 weeks may significantly reduce the symptoms of osteoarthritis and may have an effect similar to ibuprofen in reducing symptoms.

Turmeric can be easily added to some of your favorite recipes. Try adding a couple of teaspoons to your smoothie, or use it to make a batch of golden milk.

OREGANO

Oregano is an herb commonly used in dishes such as pizza and pasta. In addition to lending flavor to food, it has been used to treat medical conditions for thousands of years. Oregano is rich in antioxidants—specifically, carvacrol and thymol. Carvacrol is the most abundant compound in oregano and has been shown to help stop the growth of several different types of bacteria. Thymol is a natural antifungal component that helps support the immune system by enhancing the production of antibodies. Its potent antibacterial properties work to fight against both gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria.

Add oregano to roasted cauliflower, or use it to make a garlic oregano vinaigrette.

PAPRIKA

Paprika may be best known for adding a pop of color to dishes, but it also contains capsaicin, a compound found in peppers that has been shown to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects. Capsaicin is well known for its pain-relieving properties. It works by affecting the neurotransmitter that communicates pain signals to the brain, resulting in decreased inflammation and pain.

Once the capsaicin is extracted from the pepper, it can be added to a range of products, such as creams and gels, for effective pain-relief treatment.

Paprika is a versatile spice that can be used as a seasoning for meats, potato salad and eggs. You can also add it to soups and stews such as Hungarian goulash.

CLOVE

Clove is a sweet aromatic spice valued for providing warmth and flavor to various recipes. It contains an abundance of health benefits and has been used in traditional Chinese medicine for years. Cloves contain a compound called eugenol, which acts as a natural antioxidant. Eugenol has been linked to helping reduce the risk of inflammatory diseases such as arthritis by helping decrease oxidative stress and inflammatory responses in the body.

Cloves are also a great source of beta-carotene, which is what gives them their rich, dark brown color. In the body, beta-carotene is converted into vitamin A—an important nutrient for keeping our eyes healthy.

Cloves come both ground and whole. Try adding a sprinkle to butternut squash soup or a slice of pumpkin pie. Whole cloves can be used in a pickling mix.

CARDAMOM

Cardamom is an aromatic spice commonly used in Middle Eastern, Indian and Arabic cuisines, among others. It provides numerous health benefits due to its high levels of antioxidants. Studies show that this flavorful spice may help reduce the risk of developing heart disease by acting as a diuretic. During this process, the volume of urine and excess levels of sodium and potassium ions are increased and excreted, resulting in relaxed blood vessels and decreased blood pressure.

Cardamom has also been associated with improving digestive health. Research has shown that the extract from cardamom may help relieve gastrointestinal discomforts such as stomach cramps, gas and even stomach ulcers.

Because of its unique flavor profile, cardamom pairs well with many foods and recipes. Try using it in cookies or adding it to a curried pork and vegetable stir-fry.

BURLAP & BARREL HARVESTS PEPPERCORNS IN VIETNAM USING REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUES.

A NEW ROUTE FOR SPICES

Using a range of spices regularly can boost your antioxidant intake. These changemakers are proving that spices, especially when sourced with care, may deserve deeper appreciation.

BY MAX FALKOWITZ • REVIEWED BY VICTORIA SEAVER, M.S., RD

Võ Ngoc Dũng and Vuong Huu Thành are trying out some new filters on our Facebook video call, grinning underneath cat ears and cowboy hats. Behind them, one of their pepper groves is soaking up Vietnam's midday sun. It looks less like a farm than the ruins of some ancient, space-faring civilization: Evenly spaced pillars soar 20 feet into the air, every inch of them covered with climbing black pepper vines.

It turns out pepper is a vining fruit that grows in clusters, like grapes. The central highland of Vietnam is an agricultural region known for low-cost commodity crops; think the kind of black pepper that comes in tiny paper packets perhaps, or destined-for-instant coffee. However, Dũng and Thành—who like to go by their given names—are growing some of the best peppercorns in the world. Piperine, a naturally occurring compound that gives peppercorns their kick, may reduce the risk of certain cancers, including those of the breast, lung, prostate, ovaries and digestive tract, according to a 2019 *Applied Sciences* review.

Dũng and Thành bring their phones over to the vines to give me a close-up look at some new growth. Ethan Frisch, who's also on the line, cuts in: "Most peppercorns are picked green and unripe, when they're harder and more resilient to damage during processing. These get ripened on the vine and have a less sharp, nuanced flavor," he explains. Frisch is the cofounder of a boutique direct-to-consumer spice company called Burlap & Barrel, which carries Dũng and Thành's single-origin pepper as a year-round bestseller. "It's tricky," Frisch continues, "because they ripen at different rates and the birds try to eat them, but they develop a lot of sweetness."

Other than growing the same crop as their neighbors, Dũng and Thành's pepper operation—which uses organic, regenerative agricultural practices designed to put something back into the environment—couldn't be more different from that of the other farms in Dak Lak province. The towering monoliths hoisting the pepper vines skyward are actually trimmed trees that nourish the growing peppercorns and return nitrogen to the soil, making the land healthier and more productive.

Most growers in the region use stacks of cinder blocks instead—more convenient, but agriculturally inert. Rather than relying on chemical pesticides and fertilizers, Dũng and Thành employ chickens and ducks to eat bugs and other crop nuisances and to provide nutrient-rich manure. And while nearby farmers typically plant commercial cultivars of pepper from India, they grow local heirloom varieties, as well as coffee and chiles, because they believe that increasing biodiversity on the farm improves the pepper vines' growth.

The resulting black pepper is to most others what bean-to-bar craft chocolate is to Halloween candy. When you crack it open, you find flavors you never thought could lurk in a peppercorn. Baked plums. Fresh strawberries. An irresistible pungency and heat chased with that natural sweetness Frisch talked about.

Twenty years ago, black pepper of this quality would have been nigh impossible to grow for sale. It would have been too low-yield, too expensive, too niche to import. Most local customers wouldn't be able to afford it, and international buyers would have no way to get their hands on it. Spices are like corn and wheat—they're commodity crops. Beautiful, distinctive, break-the-mold flavors are an anomaly—not a feature—of that system.

Dũng and Thành grow heirloom varieties because they believe that increasing biodiversity improves the pepper vines' growth.

But decades after the start of the slow food revolution, the system is finally starting to change. With the help of smartphones and social media, spice farmers around the world like Dũng and Thành are finding ways to grow and sell their products outside of the supply chains that have dominated the global spice trade since its inception. "Modern technology has opened things up in such an important way. It allows growers who are doing things differently—farming organically, prioritizing flavor—to connect directly with us, as well as the buyer," says Frisch. And companies like Burlap & Barrel are giving regular home cooks access to these spices.

STRAIGHT TO THE SOURCE

Frisch and Ori Zohar, Burlap & Barrel's other cofounder, met Dũng and Thành through a mutual Vietnamese friend obsessed with regenerative agriculture, who found the pair on an online farmers message board. Before they even tasted their pepper, Frisch and Zohar were impressed by Dũng and Thành's demonstrable passion and photos of their farm. "You could see the thoughtfulness, their intentionality," Frisch muses. Zohar jumps in: "The people who wind up making the best partners are the ones who are so strongly opinionated about what they grow." (They have a habit of finishing each other's sentences.)

Frisch and Zohar launched Burlap & Barrel in 2016 to do for spices what craft coffee and chocolate importers have done for coffee and cacao. Frisch, a chef and former aid worker, had an address book fat with agricultural contacts from his development work overseas with organizations including the Aga Khan Foundation in Afghanistan. Zohar is a marketer who got his startup sea legs in Silicon Valley. He was also the numbers and logistics guy behind Guerrilla Ice Cream, a venture with Frisch that sold flavors inspired by global revolutions and donated its profits to an advocacy group for New York City street vendors. This is how I first met the duo, and where I must admit to some partiality—we've been friends and on-and-off collaborators.

All of their spice purchases begin with a personal visit to the farm. Their first meeting with Dũng and Thành was more or less a side quest on a trip to build contacts and import Vietnamese star anise and cinnamon. "We showed up to this incredible lunch where they'd just butchered a chicken," Frisch remembers. "Then we picked peppercorns for four hours with them." Dũng and Thành showed them how they run the fresh peppercorns through a small electric augur to sort out the stems and leaves, then briefly wash them in cauldrons on a coal-fired stove before setting them out in a greenhouse to dry. "You want to use as little heat as possible to dehydrate the peppercorns while maintaining the integrity of their flavor," Frisch explains.

Currently, Burlap & Barrel is working with 300 farms in 15 countries, including Guatemala (their source for cardamom, annatto and ground black lime), Tanzania (cloves, vanilla beans and cinnamon tree leaves) and Egypt (hibiscus, fennel and coriander). "In different countries, we keep meeting these incredible entrepreneurs who are just waiting

Spice-Crusted
Roasted Potatoes
at eatingwell.com/
roastedpotatoes

No-Churn Ice Cream with Cardamom & Saffron at eatingwell.com/icecream

for the right partner with a similar worldview to do their work on a greater scale," says Zohar. "It's farmers who care so deeply about their cardamom or pepper that they just want people to taste it," Frisch continues.

Frisch and Zohar help guide the farmers through the bureaucratic hoops of becoming their own processors and exporters. By cutting out the middlemen of the conventional spice supply chain, they're able to offer them a premium to secure their best harvests. "We pay six times the fair-trade price for our turmeric," Frisch says of their organic partner in the South Indian state of Karnataka. "That's 15 times the commodity price." Dũng and Thành earn up to eight times the commodity price for their pepper.

It's a financial difference that obviously matters, but Frisch contends that "the real value is in farmers knowing where their products are going." On his last trip to Guatemala, he brought one of their growers, Amilcar Pereira, Burlap & Barrel jars of the farmer's own cardamom and walked Pereira through how they label, market and price his product. "This is a fundamental change to the paradigm of the spice trade," Frisch says.

THE TRADITIONAL TRADE

It's difficult to tell by looking at the jars in your supermarket's spice aisle, but just a few companies command nearly the entire $6.2 billion North American spice market. These companies don't grow spices. Rather, they make contracts with suppliers. Some of them act purely as exporters; others are also processors that prepare the spices for whatever parameters the major companies ask for. Little about these parameters has changed over hundreds of years—spice "grades" are mainly functions of size, color and occasionally percentages of an active ingredient, like the curcumin in turmeric.

The people growing these spices are many layers removed from all of this, and most of them work on tiny family farms. A host of collectors and packers will buy their harvest at whatever the current market price is, with little room for negotiation. Those aggregators then deliver lots of spices mixed (versus single-origin) to the suppliers contracted by the major spice buyers. (By contrast, once Dũng and Thành's peppercorns are handpicked, they're sorted, washed and spread out in the sun—by Thành's mother—to dry. They've since built a greenhouse for this purpose.)

Why are spices typically bought and sold this way? In part because they always have been. "Between the time of the Pharaohs and the middle of the 19th century, the only things about the global spice industry that changed were the type of sailing ship and the compass," says Mark Barnett, a lifelong spice merchant and one of the operators who helped grow Vietnam's spice export business from a drop in the bucket to a significant player. As he puts it, while the market industrialized, the trade routes, standards and working conditions more or less stayed the same until recently. He's among those in the commodity game who have spent decades working to change the system—both the spices themselves and the incomes of the farmers who grow them.

When Barnett began working with Vietnamese spice suppliers in the early 1990s, there were few standards on exports and even fewer incentives to produce a better product. The global market just wasn't that interested in high-quality black pepper and cinnamon, two crops that thrive in the nation's tropical jungles. But he saw promise in Vietnamese Cinnamomum cassia, a variety that's hotter and spicier (imagine Big Red chewing gum) than the "true" Ceylon C. zeylanicum, native to Sri Lanka. "The underlying quality of the cinnamon was unique, but the quality assurance was nonexistent," Barnett explains. Shipping containers arrived full of mold, and suppliers weren't above wooing buyers with one lot of spices, then selling them something lower-tier.

Over the course of a 20-year contract with the Vietnamese government, Barnett and his colleagues in the industry developed a more efficient supply chain focused on higher-quality spices and organic farming methods. "We took a couple of layers out of the supply chain—traders from Hong Kong and Singapore—and Vietnam moved up the chain itself," he says, noting that when he first came to Vietnam, cinnamon and black pepper farmers received only about 10 percent of the export price of their crops (not to be confused with the much higher retail price). Today, that figure is closer to 70 or 80 percent across the Vietnamese pepper industry, and Barnett says he's proud of the progress that's been made in the commodity trade system.

LOOKING AHEAD

The past decade has seen a boom of boutique spice companies that are taking that progress even further. Many are almost monastic in their focus, such as Fly By Jing, a Chinese American startup that focuses on superlative jarred chili crisp, red chiles and tingly Sichuan peppercorns, all from Sichuan province. Then there's Diaspora Co., which for years specialized in a single earthy, fragrant turmeric before adding a half-dozen other spices, all from its founder's home country of India. "This is a scrappy kind of entrepreneurship," says Zohar. "You're meeting farmers who are building generational businesses. It takes 20 years to grow a cinnamon tree for harvest. You have to take a steady hand; you can't just grow your company 10 times year over year."

By cutting out the middlemen of the spice supply chain, they're able to offer farmers a premium to secure their best harvests.

Most of these spice companies have bypassed American supermarkets in favor of direct-to-consumer online sales and platforms that allow them to create lasting relationships with customers and even get a sense of how they use their spices. Burlap & Barrel runs a community fan page on Facebook with more than 8,000 members. They're ardent spice fans, the kind who buy out releases of new Burlap & Barrel offerings within minutes, sharing recipes and cooking tips with one another. A few are partner farmers themselves, including Dũng and Thành, who enjoy posting snapshots of daily life on their farm and commenting on photos of dishes that use their pepper. Thanks to their smartphones, Frisch says, "this is the first time in the history of the spice trade that a farmer who grows the pepper can communicate directly with the person who is cooking with it." ●

PURPLE, PLATED

Vibrant and a little mysterious, violet-hued produce is not simply pretty—it also has some pretty big health benefits.

BY BECKY DUFFETT • REVIEWED BY VICTORIA SEAVER, M.S., RD

Purple has always been powerful. The color of royalty and spiritual leaders, it has a long and storied history. It first tinted the robes of ancient kings and queens around the sixth century BC, then Roman magistrates and Catholic priests. The earliest dyes were painstakingly extracted from sea snails, making purple a shade so rare and expensive that it became a symbol of status. (Some rulers even forbade average citizens from wearing it under penalty of death.)

But purple's prestige also has to do with what it brings to our plates. Plummy-hued produce—from cold-weather cabbage and cauliflower to spring's first artichokes and asparagus—owes its color to anthocyanins, natural plant pigments that can show up as various shades of purple, black, blue and red. Anthocyanins not only imbue intense color, they also act as potent antioxidants that have been shown to reduce inflammation in the body and help ward off myriad diseases, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, hypertension, gastrointestinal issues and cognitive decline.

"Anthocyanins are the most versatile compound in terms of human health," says Mary Ann Lila, Ph.D., director of the Plants for Human Health Institute, a research center at North Carolina State University. "Others, like carotenoids or glucosinolates, are recognized for benefits against one chronic disease or a narrow spectrum of conditions. But anthocyanins have demonstrated efficacy against an extremely broad range of health impediments."

With benefits like this, no wonder more and more purple produce is cropping up at the market. And they aren't novel varieties, either: "We're actually going back to what vegetables used to look like, when purple carrots and potatoes were the norm," Lila says. "We bred the color out of them, going back many hundreds of years, to remove more pungent flavors and make them mild and sweet. It's so exciting to see the return of this vibrant color, because it has a wilder flavor." (Anthocyanins give foods a slight bitterness.)

So if you've only been color-spotting for lush greens, it's time to switch it up with some violet-colored veg. Read on to learn about the extraordinary health perks, as well as find recipes and cooking

Asparagus & Purple Artichoke Pizza at eatingwell.com/purplepizza

Purple Power Slaw with Sesame-Ginger Vinaigrette at eatingwell.com/purpleslaw

Roasted Purple Carrots with Black Sesame Dukkah at eatingwell.com/purplecarrots

German-Style Purple Potato Salad at eatingwell.com/purplepotato

tips that can help you better harness the power of purple.

GET MORE BANG FOR YOUR BITE

While raw purple vegetables retain the brightest and prettiest color, cooking them actually increases the amount of anthocyanins your body is able to absorb. "Heat releases the phytochemicals versus your body having to digest them first," explains Lila. (Just avoid boiling them to death or you'll end up with khaki vegetables and a pot full of blue water. Steaming, roasting or sautéing is fine.)

FEND OFF CANCER

A 2018 Finnish study discovered that anthocyanins increase levels of an enzyme that tamps down the expression of certain cancer genes, inhibiting cancer cells from forming and also from proliferating. (Interestingly, the same enzyme is also linked to improved blood sugar levels.) The researchers are now scrutinizing the pigment to develop preventive drugs and improve treatments for current cancer patients.

BOOST YOUR MICROBIOME

Eating ample high-fiber fruits and veggies is important for overall G.I. health, but those that are also rich in anthocyanins appear to be especially beneficial. According to a 2018 review of studies published in the *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics,* the phytonutrient significantly bumps up levels of Bifidobacterium—a type of good gut bacteria that's widely used in probiotics and has been shown to help conditions like irritable bowel syndrome. It also crowds out gut bugs that are known to be harmful.

Coconut Black Rice Bowls with Tofu & Purple Asparagus

ACTIVE: 35 min **TOTAL:** 1 hr

Beyond produce, black beans, black rice and black sesame seeds all contain anthocyanins. So forbidden black rice isn't just striking, it's also a serious nutrition upgrade. Simmering it in coconut milk adds rich aroma and flavor.

3 tablespoons avocado or peanut oil, divided
1 tablespoon minced lemongrass
3 teaspoons minced garlic, divided
1 cup black rice
1 15-ounce can light coconut milk
⅓ cup water
¾ teaspoon salt, divided
2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil
2 tablespoons reduced-sodium tamari or soy sauce
1 tablespoon packed light brown sugar
¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper
1 14-ounce package extra-firm water-packed tofu
1 pound purple asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
1 tablespoon grated peeled fresh ginger
½ cup unsweetened shredded coconut
1 tablespoon lime juice, plus lime wedges for serving
1 teaspoon black sesame seeds
3 scallions, sliced
Opal basil leaves and thinly sliced purple daikon for garnish (optional)

1. Heat 1 tablespoon avocado (or peanut) oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add lemongrass and 1 teaspoon garlic and cook, stirring often, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add rice and stir to coat. Stir in coconut milk, water and ½ teaspoon salt. Bring to a simmer over high heat. Reduce heat to maintain a simmer, cover and cook until the rice is tender and the liquid has been absorbed, 35 to 45 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, whisk sesame oil, tamari (or soy sauce), brown sugar and crushed red pepper in a small bowl. Drain tofu and cut into 2-by-1½-inch slabs. Place between paper towels and press to remove excess moisture.

3. Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons avocado (or peanut) oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tofu and cook, flipping once, until golden and crispy, 8 to 10 minutes total. Remove to a plate and sprinkle with the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt. Add asparagus, ginger and the remaining 2 teaspoons garlic to the pan; cook, stirring, until the asparagus is tender-crisp, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat. Whisk the sauce and add to the pan along with the tofu; gently stir to coat.

4. Stir coconut and lime juice into the rice. Top the rice with the tofu mixture, sesame seeds and scallions. Serve with lime wedges and garnish with basil and daikon, if desired.

SERVES 4: 1¾ CUPS EACH
CAL 577 **FAT** 37G (SAT 14G) **CHOL** 0MG **CARBS** 50G **TOTAL SUGARS** 7G (ADDED 3G) **PROTEIN** 18G **FIBER** 8G **SODIUM** 815MG **POTASSIUM** 189MG

Sumac Chicken Thighs with Purple Cauliflower

ACTIVE: 25 min **TOTAL:** 3 hr (including 2 hr marinating time)

TO MAKE AHEAD: Marinate chicken (Step 1) overnight.

Cauliflower has gone Technicolor, leaping from white to bright orange, neon green and—you guessed it—purple. The chicken in this recipe gets its hue from a marinade that's seasoned with tangy sumac.

4	**tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
	Juice of ½ lemon
3	**cloves garlic, minced**
2	**tablespoons ground sumac**
1	**teaspoon ground cumin**
¾	**teaspoon salt, divided**
2	**pounds bone-in chicken thighs, trimmed**
1	**2-pound head purple cauliflower, cut into florets (8 cups)**
1	**medium red onion, cut into ½-inch wedges**
½	**cup labneh or whole-milk plain Greek-style yogurt**
2	**tablespoons pine nuts, toasted**
1	**tablespoon chopped fresh parsley**

1. Whisk 2 tablespoons oil, lemon juice, garlic, sumac, cumin and ¼ teaspoon salt in a medium bowl. Add chicken and turn to coat. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours or overnight.

2. Position racks in center and lower third of oven. Place a rimmed baking sheet on the lower rack and preheat to 400°F.

3. Place cauliflower and onion on another rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with the remaining 2 tablespoons oil and season with the remaining ½ teaspoon salt; toss to coat. Remove the chicken from the marinade (discard the remaining marinade) and place skin-side down on the preheated pan; return to the lower rack. Place the vegetables on the center rack. Roast, turning the chicken and stirring the vegetables halfway through, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part without touching bone registers 165°F and the vegetables are tender, 25 to 35 minutes.

4. Smear labneh (or yogurt) on a serving platter and top with the chicken and vegetables. Drizzle with any juices from the chicken and sprinkle with pine nuts and parsley.

SERVES 4: 3 OZ. CHICKEN & 1½ CUPS VEGETABLES EACH
CAL 567 **FAT** 39G (SAT 9G) **CHOL** 177MG **CARBS** 18G **TOTAL SUGARS** 7G (ADDED 0G) **PROTEIN** 39G **FIBER** 6G **SODIUM** 653MG **POTASSIUM** 1203MG

TIP: To make labneh, line a large sieve with four layers of cheesecloth. Set it over a deep bowl, leaving at least 3 inches of space below it. Whisk 4 cups whole-milk plain yogurt with ¼ tsp. salt; spoon into the cheesecloth. Refrigerate until at least 1 cup of liquid has drained out, 12 to 24 hours. (Discard liquid.) Refrigerate labneh for up to 1 week.

Blackberry & Blueberry Cake Bars

ACTIVE: 15 min **TOTAL:** 1 hr

TO MAKE AHEAD: Store airtight at room temperature for up to 2 days.

These incredibly easy-to-make bars get a touch of sparkle and crunch from a sprinkle of turbinado sugar over the top. If you use frozen berries, thaw and pat them dry before topping the batter with them.

2 teaspoons unsalted butter plus 4 tablespoons, at room temperature, divided
½ cup granulated sugar
¼ cup canola oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup white whole-wheat flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup low-fat milk
1 cup fresh blackberries
1 cup fresh blueberries
¼ cup finely chopped almonds
2 tablespoons turbinado sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 9-inch-square baking pan with 2 teaspoons butter.
2. Beat the remaining 4 tablespoons butter, granulated sugar and oil in a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, or with a hand mixer, until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Beat in egg and vanilla until smooth.
3. Whisk flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and mix until halfway combined. Add milk and mix just until combined. Do not overmix.
4. Spread the batter in the prepared pan. Sprinkle blackberries and blueberries over the top and lightly press them into the batter. Sprinkle with almonds and turbinado sugar.
5. Bake until puffed and golden and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, 40 to 45 minutes.
6. Let cool slightly, then cut into 9 squares.

SERVES 9: 1 SQUARE EACH
CAL 257 **FAT** 14G (SAT 5G) **CHOL** 37MG **CARBS** 30G **TOTAL SUGARS** 17G (ADDED 14G) **PROTEIN** 4G **FIBER** 3G **SODIUM** 185MG **POTASSIUM** 110MG

CHAPTER

3

Delicious and Hearty

Filling your plate with healthy and antioxidant-rich foods is a delight with these vibrant and flavorful recipes.

How to Host a Niçoise Salad–Themed Potluck Dinner at eatingwell.com/dinnerparty

Salads by Chefs

Upgrade your basic bowl of greens with creative and flavorful salads from superstar chefs. These recipes are packed with antioxidant compounds to boost your overall health.

Butternut Squash & Piquillo Pepper Salad

ACTIVE: 50 min **TOTAL:** 1 hr 10 min

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate pickled celery, roasted squash and the goat cheese mixture separately for up to 1 day.

Steve McHugh's restaurant Cured is named for its specialty—charcuterie—but also to commemorate the chef's recovery from lymphoma. The San Antonio eatery offers a menu of dishes (including vegetarian options) that showcase ingredients that benefit the body, like the black pepper, squash and pecans in this salad, which can help fight inflammation.

1⅓ cups water, divided
½ cup rice vinegar
2 tablespoons chopped jalapeño pepper
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon kosher salt plus ¾ teaspoon, divided
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
1 teaspoon yellow mustard seeds
2 stalks celery, cut into ½-inch pieces
8 cups cubed (1-inch) peeled butternut squash
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
1 tablespoon ground coriander
1 tablespoon ground cumin
2 tablespoons red-wine vinegar
1½ teaspoons whole-grain mustard
1 teaspoon honey
1 clove garlic, grated
½ teaspoon ground pepper, divided
1 10-ounce jar piquillo peppers, rinsed and sliced
4 ounces goat cheese
1 cup toasted pecans, chopped
1 cup fresh cilantro

1. Combine 1 cup water, rice vinegar, jalapeño, sugar, 1 tablespoon salt, ginger and mustard seeds in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Place celery in a heatproof bowl and pour the vinegar mixture over it. Let stand at room temperature for 1 hour. Drain, reserving the celery, jalapeño and mustard seeds.

2. Preheat oven to 350°F and line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment.

3. Toss squash, 2 tablespoons oil, coriander, cumin and ¼ teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Transfer to the prepared pan and roast, stirring once, until tender, about 30 minutes.

4. Whisk red-wine vinegar, mustard, honey, garlic, the remaining 4 tablespoons oil and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper in the large bowl. Add the squash and peppers; stir to coat.

5. Whisk goat cheese, the remaining ⅓ cup water and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper in a small bowl until smooth. Spread the mixture on a serving platter and top with the squash, celery, jalapeño, mustard seeds, pecans and cilantro.

SERVES 8: ABOUT 1 CUP EACH
CAL 289 **FAT** 23G (SAT 4G) **CHOL** 7MG
CARBS 18G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G (ADDED 1G)
PROTEIN 6G **FIBER** 6G **SODIUM** 421MG
POTASSIUM 437MG

Steak Salad with Charred Onion Vinaigrette & Garlic-Cumin Yogurt

ACTIVE: 55 min **TOTAL:** 55 min

James Beard Award–winning chef Steven Satterfield of Atlanta's Miller Union is known for showcasing seasonal produce from local farmers in simple preparations. This salad is one example of that ethos, and Satterfield says it's a hit whenever he offers a version of it on the lunch menu.

- **1½ teaspoons ground cumin, divided**
- **1¼ teaspoons ground pepper, divided**
- **1 teaspoon ground coriander**
- **1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided**
- **½ teaspoon paprika**
- **½ teaspoon crushed red pepper**
- **1 pound skirt or flank steak**
- **½ medium red onion, peeled, root end left intact**
- **½ teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil plus 3½ tablespoons, divided**
- **2 tablespoons red-wine vinegar**
- **½ teaspoon honey**
- **½ teaspoon whole-grain mustard**
- **1 cup low-fat plain Greek-style yogurt**
- **1 teaspoon lemon zest**
- **1 tablespoon lemon juice**
- **1 small clove garlic, grated**
- **1 head romaine lettuce, cut lengthwise into 4 wedges**
- **1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved**
- **2 mini cucumbers, diced**
- **1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint**
- **1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives**

1. Preheat grill to medium-high.

2. Combine 1 teaspoon each cumin and pepper with coriander, ½ teaspoon salt, paprika and crushed red pepper in a small bowl. Sprinkle on both sides of steak. Let stand at room temperature for 10 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, brush onion with ½ teaspoon oil. Grill the onion, turning once, until charred on both sides, about 20 minutes total. Transfer to a small bowl, cover with plastic wrap and let steam until completely soft, about 10 minutes. Trim the root end and finely chop the onion.

4. Whisk vinegar, honey, mustard and ¼ teaspoon salt with the remaining 3½ tablespoons oil and ¼ teaspoon pepper in a small bowl until smooth. Stir in the onion.

5. Grill the steak to desired doneness, 1 to 3 minutes per side for medium rare. Transfer to a clean cutting board and let rest for 5 minutes before slicing.

6. Whisk yogurt, lemon zest, lemon juice and garlic with the remaining ½ teaspoon cumin and ¼ teaspoon salt in a medium bowl. Divide the yogurt mixture among 4 plates. Top each with a lettuce wedge, tomatoes, cucumber, mint, chives and some sliced steak. Drizzle each salad with the onion vinaigrette.

SERVES 4: 2 CUPS EACH
CAL 381 **FAT** 21G (SAT 5G) **CHOL** 76MG **CARBS** 15G **TOTAL SUGARS** 8G (ADDED 1G) **PROTEIN** 33G **FIBER** 5G **SODIUM** 594MG **POTASSIUM** 1114MG

Kale, Pear & Feta Salad

ACTIVE: 30 min **TOTAL:** 30 min
TO MAKE AHEAD: Store seeds airtight at room temperature and refrigerate dressing for up to 1 day.

The crunchy seed topping on this salad is the perfect textural juxtaposition to a creamy dressing, soft pears and tender massaged kale. Tossing it all with mint, feta and red onions gives it the flair that chef Cara Chigazola Tobin is so well known for.

- ¼ **cup pepitas**
- ¼ **cup sesame seeds**
- ¼ **cup sunflower seeds**
- 1½ **teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- ½ **teaspoon kosher salt, divided**
- ¼ **cup whole-milk plain Greek-style yogurt**
- 2 **tablespoons tahini**
- 1 **tablespoon water**
- 1½ **teaspoons cider vinegar**
- 1 **teaspoon lemon juice**
- 10 **cups torn stemmed kale leaves (from 2 bunches)**
- 1 **ripe pear, thinly sliced**
- ¼ **medium red onion, thinly sliced**
- 1 **cup fresh mint, divided**
- ½ **cup crumbled feta cheese**

1. Preheat oven to 325°F.
2. Spread pepitas, sesame seeds and sunflower seeds on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake, stirring once, until lightly toasted, about 10 minutes. Immediately scrape the seeds into a medium bowl and toss with oil and ⅛ teaspoon salt. Let cool to room temperature, 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, whisk yogurt, tahini, water, vinegar, lemon juice and the remaining ⅛ teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Add kale and massage with the dressing to soften the leaves. Add pear, onion and ½ cup mint and toss to combine.
4. Serve the salad topped with feta, the remaining ½ cup mint and the seeds.

SERVES 4: 2 CUPS EACH
CAL 308 **FAT** 21G (SAT 5G) **CHOL** 19MG **CARBS** 23G **TOTAL SUGARS** 7G (ADDED 0G) **PROTEIN** 12G **FIBER** 8G **SODIUM** 447MG **POTASSIUM** 583MG

Collard Green Salad with Peanut Vinaigrette

ACTIVE: 30 min **TOTAL:** 40 min

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate vinaigrette (Step 1) for up to 2 days.

A Top Chef *finalist and James Beard Award nominee, chef Dawn Burrell is also an Olympian. She found her love of food while traveling the world with the USA Track & Field team. That journey inspired her signature global comfort cooking style, which explores the intersection of African and Asian foods, as seen in this salad.*

Peanut Vinaigrette

2 tablespoons cane vinegar or white balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon lime juice
1 clove garlic, crushed and peeled
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
¼ small shallot, sliced
1 tablespoon turbinado sugar
1 teaspoon fish sauce or crawfish powder
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper
¼ cup unsalted roasted peanuts
¼ cup water, plus more if needed
⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Salad

1 cup thinly sliced cucumber
1¾ teaspoons salt, divided
1¾ teaspoons granulated sugar, divided
1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
1 cup thinly sliced red onion
1¼ pounds collard greens or kale, stemmed and chopped (8 cups)
4 hard-boiled eggs, crumbled
1 avocado, cubed
½ cup unsalted roasted peanuts, crushed

1. To prepare vinaigrette: Combine vinegar, lime juice, garlic, ginger, shallot, turbinado, fish sauce (or crawfish powder), ½ teaspoon salt and crushed red pepper in a blender. Blend until smooth. Add ¼ cup peanuts and water. Blend until smooth. If necessary, add more water to make the mixture move. With the motor running, slowly drizzle in oil until emulsified.

2. To prepare salad: Place cucumber in a fine-mesh sieve set over a bowl and sprinkle with 1½ teaspoons each salt and granulated sugar; toss to coat. Let sit for 15 minutes. Rinse and drain on a paper towel. Place tomatoes in a medium bowl and sprinkle with the remaining ¼ teaspoon each salt and sugar. Place onion in a small bowl and cover with water. Drain and repeat 3 times. Drain on a paper towel.

3. Place greens in a large bowl. Add the vinaigrette and massage it into the greens until softened. Add the cucumber, tomatoes and onion and toss to coat. Serve topped with eggs, avocado and crushed peanuts.

SERVES 4: 2½ CUPS EACH
CAL 565 **FAT** 46G (SAT 8G) **CHOL** 187MG
CARBS 26G **TOTAL SUGARS** 12G
(ADDED 4G) **PROTEIN** 18G **FIBER** 10G
SODIUM 750MG **POTASSIUM** 938MG

Steak, White Kimchi & Forbidden Rice Salad

ACTIVE: 45 min **TOTAL:** 1 hr

Anthony Myint is not just a restaurateur—he's an activist who is helping to reduce the carbon footprints of restaurants. He and his wife, Karen Leibowitz, started the Perennial Farming Initiative to partner with restaurants such as New York City's Mission Chinese Food to showcase ingredients—such as the rice, mushrooms and beef in this salad—that help fight climate change. High-yield forbidden rice needs less water to grow, and the mushrooms and beef Myint sources are farmed in ways that help rehabilitate nutrient-depleted soil.

8	**ounces hanger or boneless rib-eye steak, trimmed**
¾	**teaspoon salt, divided**
¾	**cup plus 2 tablespoons water**
½	**cup forbidden rice or brown rice**
5	**tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided, plus more to taste**
1	**cup thinly sliced shallots**
2	**cups sliced shiitake mushrooms**
4	**scallions, trimmed and cut into ½-inch pieces**
1	**large ripe avocado, cubed**
½	**cup white kimchi (baek kimchi) or fresh sauerkraut, drained**
4	**cups tatsoi, spinach or other tender greens**
1	**tablespoon lemon juice**
¼	**cup toasted sunflower seeds**

1. Sprinkle steak with ¼ teaspoon salt; set aside for 30 minutes or refrigerate for up to 1 day.

2. Bring water to a boil in a small saucepan. Add rice, reduce heat to low, cover and cook until the water is just absorbed, about 30 minutes for forbidden rice or 40 minutes for brown rice. Stir in 1 tablespoon oil and ¼ teaspoon salt and spread the rice on a baking sheet to cool.

3. Meanwhile, separate shallot slices into rings. Heat 3 tablespoons oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add shallots and cook, stirring often, until browned and crispy, 6 to 8 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the shallots to a plate; set aside.

4. Add mushrooms and ⅛ teaspoon salt to the pan; cook, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 5 minutes. Add scallions and cook, stirring, until tender, about 1 minute. Transfer to a large bowl.

5. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the pan. Cook the steak, turning once and adjusting the heat as necessary, until browned and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part registers 135°F, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer to a clean cutting board and let rest for 10 minutes. Cut into cubes.

6. Transfer the rice to the bowl with the vegetables and add avocado, kimchi (or sauerkraut) and the steak; gently mix to combine. Divide among 4 shallow bowls. Add greens to the large bowl and toss with lemon juice and the remaining ⅛ teaspoon salt. Top the rice mixture with the greens, the reserved shallots and sunflower seeds. Drizzle with more oil, if desired.

SERVES 4: 2 CUPS EACH
CAL 495 **FAT** 32G (SAT 5G) **CHOL** 37MG
CARBS 37G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G
(ADDED 0G) **PROTEIN** 21G **FIBER** 10G
SODIUM 582MG **POTASSIUM** 930MG

Celebrating Citrus

These recipes highlight oranges, lemons, limes and grapefruit, which all have antioxidant properties that can protect against heart disease in cancer.

Broiled Lamb Chops with Charred Blood Oranges

ACTIVE: 35 min

TOTAL: 1 hr 15 min

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate lamb chops (Step 1) for up to 2 hours.

In the south of France, lamb is often grilled on a bed of fresh rosemary and anointed with citrus juice. This lamb chop recipe takes inspiration from that tradition with a wet rub made with lots of garlic plus rosemary and blood orange. Besides being a beautiful garnish, the charred blood oranges are served to squeeze over the lamb for a final flourish of citrus flavor.

2	blood oranges
6	cloves garlic, finely chopped
½	teaspoon kosher salt
3	tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1	tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary, plus 6 sprigs
8	lamb loin chops (1½ inch thick, 1½ to 1¾ pounds total), trimmed

1. Zest oranges. Cut them in half and set aside. Mash garlic and salt into a paste with a fork or the side of a chef's knife. Transfer to a small bowl and stir in the zest, oil and chopped rosemary. Arrange rosemary sprigs on a plate and place lamb chops on top. Reserve 2 tablespoons of the paste and spread the rest over the lamb. Let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes or refrigerate for up to 2 hours.

2. Position rack in upper third of oven; preheat broiler.

3. Place the reserved orange halves on a baking sheet cut-side up. Scatter the rosemary sprigs among the oranges and place the chops on top, not touching. Broil until the oranges are charred and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of a chop registers 140°F for medium-rare, 13 to 15 minutes.

4. Spoon the reserved paste over the lamb chops. Cut the oranges into wedges and serve with the lamb for squeezing.

SERVES 4: 2 LAMB CHOPS AND ½ ORANGE EACH

CAL 279 **FAT** 17G (SAT 4G) **CHOL** 62MG **CARBS** 10G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G **PROTEIN** 20G **FIBER** 2G **SODIUM** 415MG **POTASSIUM** 401MG **CALCIUM** 47MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 20MG **FOLATE** 17MCG **VITAMIN A** 228IU **VITAMIN C** 39MG

Ancho-Spiced Chicken Skillet with Grapefruit Salsa

ACTIVE: 30 min **TOTAL:** 30 min

This recipe uses ancho chile powder, which is made from dried poblano peppers and is a bit milder than regular chili powder. Sweet red grapefruit is our favorite for this dish, but any variety will do. Serve with rice to soak up the yummy sauce.

- **2 grapefruits**
- **3 scallions, thinly sliced, whites and greens separated, divided**
- **Zest and juice of 1 lime**
- **2 teaspoons honey**
- **1 pound chicken cutlets**
- **2 teaspoons ancho chile powder**
- **½ teaspoon salt**
- **2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- **1 tablespoon butter**

1. Remove skin and white pith from each grapefruit with a knife. Working over a medium bowl, cut grapefruit segments from their surrounding membranes and place them in the bowl. Squeeze juice from the membranes into the bowl. Add scallion greens, lime zest, lime juice and honey. Strain ⅓ cup of the juice from the salsa into a measuring cup and set aside.

2. Pat chicken dry and sprinkle both sides with chile powder and salt. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the chicken and cook until browned and cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer to a clean plate.

3. Meanwhile, add the reserved ⅓ cup juice and scallion whites to the pan, scraping up any browned bits with a wooden spoon. Bring to a simmer. Stir in butter and remove from heat.

4. Return the chicken and any accumulated juices to the pan and turn to coat with the sauce. Serve the chicken topped with the sauce and the salsa.

SERVES 4: 3 OZ. CHICKEN, 1 TBSP. SAUCE & ¼ CUP SALSA EACH

CAL 283 **FAT** 12G (SAT 3G) **CHOL** 73MG **CARBS** 19G **TOTAL SUGARS** 12G **PROTEIN** 27G **FIBER** 3G **SODIUM** 407MG **NIACIN EQUIVALENTS** 1MG **VITAMIN A** 2024IU

Cara Cara Orange & Burrata Salad

ACTIVE: 20 min **TOTAL:** 20 min

At the soft center of burrata is stracciatella, a fresh cheese made from shreds of stretched curd and cream. The cheese's richness complements the juicy tang of citrus and tarragon in this salad.

4 Cara Cara oranges (see Tip)
2 tablespoons pomegranate juice
2 teaspoons honey
2 teaspoons lime juice
2 teaspoons rice vinegar
2 teaspoons minced shallot
2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh tarragon, plus leaves for garnish
½ teaspoon whole-grain mustard
⅛ teaspoon salt
⅛ teaspoon ground pepper
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
5 cups red-leaf Boston or Bibb lettuce
4 ounces burrata cheese
2 tablespoons pomegranate arils (seeds)
Crushed toasted hazelnuts for garnish

1. Using a sharp knife, slice both ends off oranges and remove the peels and white pith; discard. Cut the oranges into ¼-inch-thick slices.
2. Whisk pomegranate juice, honey, lime juice, vinegar, shallot, tarragon, mustard, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Slowly whisk in oil. Reserve 3 tablespoons of the dressing. Toss lettuce with the remaining dressing in the bowl.

3. Arrange the lettuce and orange slices on a platter. Tear burrata and scatter over the top along with pomegranate arils. Drizzle with the reserved 3 tablespoons dressing and sprinkle with hazelnuts and tarragon leaves, if desired.

TIP: Cara Cara oranges have a minimal amount of pith that makes these medium-size navel oranges ideal to supreme or segment. They have a sweeter, more complex flavor than a standard navel and a more crimson color, closer to a red grapefruit or blood orange. Find them at the grocery store in early winter.

SERVES 4: 1¼ CUPS EACH
CAL 248 **FAT** 14G (SAT 5G) **CHOL** 20MG
CARBS 27G **TOTAL SUGARS** 19G
PROTEIN 7G **FIBER** 4G **SODIUM** 205MG
POTASSIUM 205MG **VITAMIN A** 3991IU

Garlic Pork Chops with Fennel-Citrus Salad

ACTIVE: 25 min **TOTAL:** 25 min

Basting pork chops in garlic and butter keeps them moist and infuses them with flavor. Complemented by a light, citrusy salad, this dish is healthy and well balanced.

- **4 boneless pork chops, ½ inch thick, trimmed (about 1 pound)**
- **1¼ teaspoons kosher salt, divided**
- **¾ teaspoon ground pepper, divided**
- **4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- **1 tablespoon unsalted butter**
- **1 clove garlic, smashed and peeled**
- **1 red grapefruit**
- **1 orange**
- **1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar**
- **1 5-ounce package baby lettuce mix**
- **1 large fennel bulb, trimmed and thinly sliced, fronds reserved for garnish**

1. Pat pork chops dry with a paper towel. Season on both sides with ¾ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper.

2. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chops and cook, undisturbed, until golden on one side, about 4 minutes. Add butter and garlic; tip the pan slightly and use a spoon to baste the chops with the butter. Flip and continue to cook, basting occasionally, until golden and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center of each chop reaches 145°F, 2 to 4 minutes more. Transfer to a clean cutting board to rest for 5 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, slice both ends off grapefruit. Using a sharp knife, remove and discard the peel and white pith. Working over a large bowl, cut the segments from their surrounding membranes, letting the juice fall into the bowl and setting the segments aside. Squeeze the juice into the bowl and discard the membrane. Repeat with orange.

4. Add vinegar, the remaining 3 tablespoons oil, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper to the juices in the large bowl and whisk to combine. Add lettuce and fennel along with the grapefruit and orange segments; toss until evenly coated.

5. Slice the pork, if desired; serve with the salad. Garnish with fennel fronds, if desired.

SERVES 4: 3 OZ. PORK & 2½ CUPS SALAD EACH
CAL 343 **FAT** 22G (SAT 5G) **CHOL** 65MG **CARBS** 16G **TOTAL SUGARS** 10G **PROTEIN** 20G **FIBER** 4G **SODIUM** 695MG **POTASSIUM** 633MG **NIACIN EQUIVALENTS** 6MG **VITAMIN A** 4356IU **VITAMIN B_6** 1MG

Lemon-Garlic Pasta with Salmon

ACTIVE: 15 min **TOTAL:** 15 min

Wondering what to do with leftover salmon? This is a delicious and easy way to turn it into another quick, weeknight-friendly dinner. Don't forget to reserve some pasta water—its starch will thicken the lemon-garlic sauce and makes it silky-smooth.

8 ounces whole-wheat pasta
5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
5 cloves garlic, chopped
1 teaspoon anchovy paste
¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
1½ cups flaked cooked salmon
3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
¼ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons whole-wheat breadcrumbs, toasted

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain, reserving ½ cup cooking water.
2. Combine oil, garlic, anchovy paste, crushed red pepper, lemon zest and lemon juice in a large skillet. Heat over medium-high heat until sizzling, about 3 minutes. Add the reserved water, the pasta, salmon, parsley and salt. Cook, stirring, until the sauce coats the pasta, about 2 minutes. Serve topped with breadcrumbs.

SERVES 8: 1⅓ CUPS EACH
CAL 473 **FAT** 23G (SAT 3G) **CHOL** 26MG **CARBS** 49G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G (ADDED 1G) **PROTEIN** 20G **FIBER** 6G **SODIUM** 395MG **POTASSIUM** 513MG **CALCIUM** 63MG **IRON** 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 94MG **FOLATE** 59MCG **VITAMIN A** 367IU **VITAMIN C** 16MG

The Power of Beans and Greens

These nutritious, easy-on-the-wallet ingredients bring harmony—and an antioxidant punch—to the dishes you cook them in.

BY LIANA KRISSOFF

Chipotle Black-Eyed Peas & Collards with Crispy Shallots

ACTIVE: 30 min **TOTAL:** 2 hr (plus overnight soaking)

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate peas and reserved cooking liquid (Step 1) separately for up to 3 days.

Instead of getting flavor from a ham hock, this mess of black-eyed peas and collards derives its smokiness from canned chipotles and caramelized shallots, thereby keeping it vegetarian.

- 8 ounces dried black-eyed peas (about 1⅓ cups), soaked overnight
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 large shallots, thinly sliced
- Pinch of salt plus ½ teaspoon, divided
- 2 small bunches collard greens (about 1¼ pounds total), stemmed and torn into bite-size pieces
- 2 tablespoons minced chipotle chiles in adobo sauce
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- Steamed brown rice (optional)

1. Drain the soaked peas and rinse. Place in a large pot and add enough water to cover by 2 inches. Bring to a boil over high heat. Adjust heat to maintain a gentle simmer, cover and cook until tender, 30 to 45 minutes. (Alternatively, cook peas in a pressure cooker or slow cooker.) Reserve 1½ cups of the liquid and drain the peas.

2. Heat oil in the pot over medium heat. Add shallots and a pinch of salt and cook, stirring frequently, until deeply browned, 10 to 15 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer half the shallots to a paper-towel-lined plate.

3. Add collards to the pot and toss until bright green and wilted, about 3 minutes. Add the reserved cooking liquid and chipotles. Bring to a boil. Adjust heat to maintain a simmer, cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

4. Gently stir in the peas. Cover and simmer until the collards are very tender, about 10 minutes more. Stir in lime juice and the remaining ½ teaspoon salt. Top with the shallots and serve with rice, if desired.

SERVES 4: ABOUT 1 CUP EACH
CAL 400 **FAT** 15G (SAT 2G) **CHOL** 0MG
CARBS 52G **TOTAL SUGARS** 12G (ADDED 0G)
PROTEIN 17G **FIBER** 16G **SODIUM** 373MG
POTASSIUM 903MG

Warm Spinach Salad with Chickpeas & Roasted Tomatoes

ACTIVE: 15 min **TOTAL:** 50 min

The key to the incredible flavor here is roasting until the onion slices are charred at the edges and the juices from the tomatoes have cooked into a syrupy consistency on the baking sheet.

1 medium sweet onion, sliced ¼ inch thick
4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
½ teaspoon salt, divided
1 pint cherry or grape tomatoes
3 cups cooked chickpeas
1¼ teaspoons dried oregano
¼ teaspoon ground pepper
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
1 tablespoon tahini
½ teaspoon maple syrup
8 cups lightly packed spinach (8 ounces)

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Toss onion with 1 tablespoon oil and ⅛ teaspoon salt on a large rimmed baking sheet. Spread into an even layer. Roast for 10 minutes.
3. Push the onion to one side of the pan. Add tomatoes to the empty side and sprinkle with ⅛ teaspoon salt. Roll the tomatoes around on the pan to oil them up a bit. Roast until the onion is blackened in spots and the tomatoes have collapsed and released some of their juices, about 25 to 30 minutes more.
4. Add chickpeas, oregano and pepper to the pan and drizzle with 1 tablespoon oil. Toss to combine the vegetables, scraping up the browned bits. Return to the oven and roast until the oregano is fragrant and the chickpeas are heated through, about 5 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, whisk the remaining 2 tablespoons oil, vinegar, tahini, maple syrup and the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Add spinach and toss to coat. Top the spinach with the roasted vegetables and chickpeas. Serve warm.

SERVES 4: 2 CUPS EACH
CAL 421 **FAT** 19G (SAT 3G) **CHOL** 0MG
CARBS 49G **TOTAL SUGARS** 13G
(ADDED 1G) **PROTEIN** 16G **FIBER** 14G
SODIUM 398MG **POTASSIUM** 658MG

Charro Beans with Chorizo & Kale Slaw

ACTIVE: 35 min **TOTAL:** 2½ hr (plus overnight soaking)

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate beans and reserved cooking liquid (Step 1) separately for up to 3 days.

This dish gets its name from the Mexican cowboys (charros) who cooked these soupy beans over campfires as they traveled the open range. The kale slaw is a bright foil for this earthy dish. Enjoy a bowl as is, or scoop it up with warm tortillas. Look for Mexican-style chorizo near other sausage in well-stocked supermarkets or Latin American markets.

1 pound dried pinto beans (about 2 cups), soaked overnight
9 ounces Mexican-style chorizo, casing removed
1 medium onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1½ teaspoons salt, divided
¼ teaspoon ground pepper
6 cups very thinly sliced kale
1½ tablespoons lime juice
1 small carrot, shredded
2 tablespoons pepitas, toasted

1. Drain the soaked beans and rinse. Place in a large pot and add water to cover by at least 2 inches. Bring to a boil over high heat. Adjust heat to maintain a gentle simmer, cover and cook until tender, 1 to 1½ hours. (Alternatively, cook beans in a pressure cooker or slow cooker.) Reserve 2 cups of the cooking liquid and drain the beans.

2. Cook chorizo, onion and garlic in the pot over medium heat, stirring frequently to break up the sausage, until the onion and garlic are tender, 8 to 12 minutes. Stir in the reserved cooking liquid, scraping up any browned bits. Add the beans, ¾ teaspoon salt and pepper. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, place kale in a large bowl. Drizzle with lime juice and sprinkle with the remaining ¾ teaspoon salt. Massage the kale until wilted and darker green. Add carrot and pepitas; toss well. Serve the beans topped with the slaw.

SERVES 8: 1 CUP BEANS & ½ CUP SLAW
CAL 361 **FAT** 14G (SAT 4G) **CHOL** 22MG
CARBS 43G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G (ADDED 0G) **PROTEIN** 19G **FIBER** 14G
SODIUM 600MG **POTASSIUM** 640MG

+

TO MAKE AHEAD, REFRIGERATE BEANS AND RESERVED COOKING LIQUID SEPARATELY FOR UP TO 3 DAYS.

Black Bean & Chard Sliders with Poblanos

ACTIVE: 1 hr **TOTAL:** 1 hr

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate pickled onion (Step 1) for up to 2 days.

Take your time patting the beans dry: It keeps the sliders from falling apart. You can make 8 larger patties to fit regular-size buns, but try to keep them about ½ inch thick so they'll heat through under the broiler without burning.

- **1 cup boiling water**
- **1 tablespoon honey**
- **¾ teaspoon salt, divided**
- **1 cup cider vinegar**
- **1 small red onion, thinly sliced**
- **3 medium poblano peppers**
- **1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- **1 medium yellow onion, diced**
- **3 cloves garlic, minced**
- **1 bunch chard, including stems, chopped (8 cups)**
- **4½ cups cooked black beans, patted dry**
- **1 large egg, lightly beaten**
- **½ cup fine dry whole-wheat breadcrumbs**
- **2 teaspoons Creole seasoning, plus more for serving**
- **Cooking spray**
- **16 slider buns, preferably whole-wheat, split and toasted**
- **1 cup crumbled feta cheese**

1. Combine boiling water, honey and ½ teaspoon salt in a heatproof bowl, stirring to dissolve the honey and salt. Stir in vinegar, then add red onion. Set aside.

2. Position rack in upper third of oven; preheat broiler to high. Place peppers on a baking sheet and broil, turning occasionally, until blackened on all sides, 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer to a bowl, cover with plastic wrap and let steam until cool enough to handle, about 15 minutes. Peel and seed the peppers. Slice or tear them into strips; set aside.

3. Meanwhile, heat 1½ teaspoons oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add yellow onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft and light golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Add garlic; cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant and soft, 1 to 2 minutes. Scrape onto a plate.

4. Return the pan to medium heat and add the remaining 1½ teaspoons oil and chard. Cook, stirring frequently and adding a splash of water if it starts to stick, until the stems are tender and any liquid has evaporated, 5 to 8 minutes. Scrape onto the plate and let cool, about 10 minutes.

5. Place beans in a large bowl and coarsely mash. Add the chard mixture, egg, breadcrumbs, Creole seasoning and the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt; mix well.

6. Coat a baking sheet with cooking spray. Using about ⅓ cup to make each, portion the bean mixture into 16 patties, ½ inch thick, and place on the prepared baking sheet. Coat the patties lightly with cooking spray. Broil until browned and firm on top, 6 to 8 minutes. Flip the patties and coat the other side with cooking spray. Broil until browned, 4 to 6 minutes more.

7. Serve the patties in buns, topped with the reserved peppers, pickled onion and feta. Sprinkle with more Creole seasoning, if desired.

SERVES 8: 2 SLIDERS EACH
CAL 457 **FAT** 13G (SAT 3G) **CHOL** 40MG **CARBS** 72G **TOTAL SUGARS** 9G (ADDED 0G) **PROTEIN** 23G **FIBER** 11G **SODIUM** 564MG **POTASSIUM** 611MG

Braised Cabbage & Lima Beans over Rye Toast

ACTIVE: 35 min **TOTAL:** 2¾ hr (plus overnight soaking)

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate beans and reserved cooking liquid (Step 1) separately for up to 3 days.

This simple, homey dish is exactly what you need after a day of playing in the snow. Enjoy in front of a fire with a hearty black lager alongside.

- **10 ounces dried lima beans (about 1½ cups), soaked overnight**
- **3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- **1 medium onion, coarsely chopped**
- **6 cloves garlic, peeled**
- **Pinch of salt plus ½ teaspoon, divided**
- **3 cups low-sodium vegetable broth**
- **8 cups chopped green cabbage (1-inch pieces; about 1 small head)**
- **½ teaspoon ground pepper plus cracked pepper to taste**
- **6 ½-inch-thick slices dark rye or whole-wheat bread, toasted**
- **6 tablespoons grated Pecorino Romano cheese**

1. Drain the soaked beans and rinse. Place in a large pot and add enough water to cover by 2 inches. Bring to a boil over high heat. Adjust heat to maintain a gentle simmer, cover and cook until tender, 1½ to 2 hours. (Alternatively, cook beans in a pressure cooker or slow cooker.) Reserve 2 cups of the cooking liquid and drain the beans.

2. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in the pot over medium heat. Add onion, garlic and a pinch of salt; cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is starting to brown, 5 to 8 minutes. Stir in broth and the reserved cooking liquid, scraping up any browned bits. Stir in cabbage and ground pepper. Bring to a boil. Adjust heat to maintain a simmer, cover and cook until the cabbage is very tender, about 25 minutes. Season with the remaining ½ teaspoon salt.

3. Gently mix in the beans. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Serve the bean mixture over toast and top with the remaining 2 tablespoons oil, cheese and cracked pepper.

SERVES 6: 1¼ CUPS CABBAGE & BEANS AND 1 SLICE TOAST EACH
CAL 364 **FAT** 10G (SAT 2G) **CHOL** 5MG **CARBS** 55G **TOTAL SUGARS** 10G (ADDED 0G) **PROTEIN** 16G **FIBER** 14G **SODIUM** 566MG **POTASSIUM** 1065MG

Freeze-Tried

Frozen vegetables pack all the nutrition of fresh but won't go bad in your crisper drawer. Here are five we always have on hand.

BY KAREN ANSEL, M.S., RDN

BUY IT

Mirepoix Blend

Stash this basic building-block combo (chopped carrots, celery and onion) in your freezer to save some serious prep time.

TRY IT

1. Parmesan White Beans

Sauté ½ cup frozen mirepoix blend in 1 Tbsp. olive oil in a large saucepan. Add two 15-oz. cans rinsed no-salt-added white beans, ½ tsp. dried herbes de Provence, the juice of 1 lemon and ½ tsp. each salt and pepper. Stir well; simmer for 5 minutes. Top with ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese.

SERVES 6: ½ cup each

BUY IT

Chopped Spinach

Keeping a bag—as opposed to the solid brick—of these greens on hand means you can grab a handful here and there for any of your mealtime needs, such as greening up an omelet or adding a vitamin K boost to a smoothie.

TRY IT

2. Cheesy Spinach Fritters

Squeeze as much liquid as possible from a thawed 1-lb. bag of frozen spinach. Combine the spinach with 1 chopped shallot, ¾ cup each plain breadcrumbs and shredded sharp Cheddar cheese, 1 large egg and ¼ tsp. each salt and pepper. Form into six 3-inch patties. Heat 3 Tbsp. olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat and cook until lightly browned on both sides, 3 to 4 minutes.

SERVES 6: 1 fritter each

BUY IT

Cubed Butternut Squash

These ready-to-use chunks are super-versatile for mashing or sautéing.

TRY IT

3. Curried Mashed Butternut Squash

Heat a 10-oz. package of unseasoned cubed frozen butternut squash according to package directions. Mash in a large bowl to desired

consistency. Stir in 2 tsp. each curry powder and maple syrup, ½ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper. Top with ¼ cup chopped pistachios.

SERVES 4: ½ cup each

BUY IT

Frozen Peas

Keep a big bag on hand to pump up the veg in mac and cheese, fried rice or pasta or to puree into soups and dips.

TRY IT

4. Quinoa with Peas & Lemon

Sauté 1 chopped shallot in 1 Tbsp. olive oil in a large skillet. Stir in a 10-oz. package frozen peas and 2 cups cooked quinoa. Heat through. Stir in the zest of 1 lemon, ¼ cup crumbled goat cheese, ¾ tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper.

SERVES 6: ½ cup each

BUY IT

Broccoli & Cauliflower Blend

This family-friendly classic is great for casseroles, sautés and stir-fries.

TRY IT

5. Balsamic Broccoli & Cauliflower

Sauté 2 sliced garlic cloves in 2 Tbsp. olive oil in a large skillet. Stir in a thawed and drained 10-oz. bag broccoli and cauliflower, 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar, 2 tsp. chopped fresh thyme, ½ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper. Cook until hot, about 1 minute.

SERVES 4: ½ cup each ●

Freezer Finds

Whether you have frozen peas, spinach, cauliflower or a medley of vegetables, these recipes are easily adapted to the ingredients on hand.

Cauliflower Fried "Rice" with Steak

ACTIVE: 30 min **TOTAL:** 30 min

You could argue that fried rice is really all about the add-ins, so why not skip the grain itself and save some calories with cauliflower while you're at it? If you want to make this recipe vegetarian, swap sliced mushrooms for the steak. Either way, you don't have to be on a low-carb diet to love this 30-minute dinner.

- **8 ounces flank steak, thinly sliced**
- **4 tablespoons reduced-sodium tamari, divided**
- **1 tablespoon Shaoxing rice wine or dry sherry**
- **4 tablespoons canola oil, divided**
- **2 large eggs, lightly beaten**
- **1 cup diced carrots**
- **4 scallions, sliced, greens and whites separated**
- **1 cup frozen peas**
- **2 cloves garlic, minced**
- **1 tablespoon minced peeled fresh ginger**
- **4 cups riced cauliflower**
- **2 teaspoons sesame seeds**
- **1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil**

1. Toss steak with 1 tablespoon tamari and rice wine (or sherry) in a medium bowl.

2. Heat 1 teaspoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add eggs and cook, stirring, until set, about 1 minute. Transfer to a bowl.

3. Increase heat to medium-high and add 2 teaspoons oil and the steak to the pan. Cook, stirring, until the steak is no longer pink, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer the steak and any accumulated juices to the bowl with the eggs.

4. Add 2 tablespoons oil, carrots and scallion whites to the pan; cook, stirring, until the carrots are starting to soften, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in peas, garlic and ginger. Cook, stirring, until the garlic is fragrant and the carrots are tender, 2 to 3 minutes more. Transfer the mixture to the bowl with the steak.

5. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and riced cauliflower to the pan. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the cauliflower is tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the reserved eggs, steak and vegetables and the remaining 3 tablespoons tamari. Serve topped with scallion greens, sesame seeds and sesame oil.

SERVES 4: 1½ CUPS EACH
CAL 355 **FAT** 22G (SAT 3G) **CHOL** 128MG
CARBS 15G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G
PROTEIN 22G **FIBER** 5G **SODIUM** 853MG
POTASSIUM 443MG **CALCIUM** 94MG
IRON 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 38MG
FOLATE 54MCG **VITAMIN A** 6320IU
VITAMIN C 53MG

Slow-Cooker Chicken & Wild Rice Soup with Asparagus & Peas

ACTIVE: 30 min
TOTAL: 3 hr 30 min

Wild rice contains the powerful antioxidant apigenin, which has shown interesting results in anti-cancer research. Adding the asparagus and peas to the slow cooker for the last 20 minutes of cooking and leaving the lid off ensures that the vegetables stay bright green and are perfectly done without getting mushy.

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
1¼ pounds bone-in chicken thighs, skin removed
7 cloves garlic, divided
6 cups unsalted chicken broth
1 large carrot, halved lengthwise and sliced ¼ inch thick
1 medium leek, white and pale green parts only, sliced
½ cup wild rice
1¼ teaspoons kosher salt
¾ teaspoon ground pepper
8 ounces asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
1½ cups English peas, fresh or frozen (thawed)
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
1 tablespoon lemon juice
8 (½-inch-thick) slices whole-wheat baguette, toasted

1. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook, turning once, until deep golden brown, about 5 minutes total. Transfer to a 5- to 6-quart slow cooker. Finely chop 6 garlic cloves and add to the slow cooker along with broth, carrot, leek, wild rice, salt and pepper.

2. Cover and cook until the chicken is cooked through and the rice is tender, 3 hours on high or 6 hours on low. Transfer the chicken to a clean cutting board and shred into bite-size pieces; discard bones.

3. Add asparagus and peas to the slow cooker; cook on high, uncovered, until the vegetables are bright green and tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in the shredded chicken, parsley, chives and lemon juice.

4. Halve the remaining garlic clove and rub the cut sides over both sides of toasts. Drizzle the toasts with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Serve the soup with the toasts.

SERVES 8: ABOUT 1 CUP EACH
CAL 322 **FAT** 8G (SAT 2G) **CHOL** 36MG **CARBS** 44G **TOTAL SUGARS** 5G **PROTEIN** 20G **FIBER** 4G **SODIUM** 732MG **POTASSIUM** 355MG **CALCIUM** 31MG **IRON** 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 35MG **FOLATE** 45MCG **VITAMIN A** 2403IU **VITAMIN C** 12MG

Zucchini & Corn Enchiladas

ACTIVE: 25 min **TOTAL:** 55 min

Skip rolling and just layer these quick and easy enchiladas. This recipe uses a speedy blender sauce, but if you're short on time, pick up a can of your favorite red enchilada sauce in the international aisle of your grocery store—you'll need about 3 cups.

- **1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes**
- **2 cups diced white onion, divided**
- **2 small cloves garlic**
- **1 dried chipotle or ancho chile pepper, stemmed**
- **1½ tablespoons chili powder**
- **1½ tablespoons dried oregano, preferably Mexican**
- **1½ teaspoons ground cumin**
- **½ teaspoon salt**
- **16 corn tortillas**
- **2 cups diced zucchini**
- **2 cups frozen corn**
- **2 cups shredded Colby Jack cheese, divided**

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.

2. Combine tomatoes, 1 cup onion, garlic, chile, chili powder, oregano, cumin and salt in a blender; puree on high until smooth, about 1 minute.

3. Spread ½ cup of the sauce in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Layer 4 tortillas over the sauce. Top with ½ cup zucchini, ½ cup corn, ½ cup cheese and ¼ cup of the remaining onion. Repeat the layers twice. Top with the remaining tortillas, zucchini, corn and onion. Spread the remaining sauce on top.

4. Coat a large piece of foil with cooking spray and cover the baking dish tightly. Bake the enchiladas for 10 minutes. Remove the foil and sprinkle on the remaining ½ cup cheese. Continue baking until the cheese is melted and the edges are starting to brown, 15 to 20 minutes longer.

SERVES 8: 1 CUP EACH
CAL 301 **FAT** 12G (SAT 6G) **CHOL** 27MG
CARBS 41G **TOTAL SUGARS** 7G
PROTEIN 13G **FIBER** 7G **SODIUM** 528MG
POTASSIUM 633MG **CALCIUM** 290MG
IRON 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 78MG
FOLATE 46MCG **VITAMIN A** 1469IU
VITAMIN C 17MG

Pea Soup

ACTIVE: 15 min **TOTAL:** 15 min

A simple pea soup makes an elegant start to a spring meal. It's also a great way to use frozen vegetables when the produce section is looking bleak.

- **1 tablespoon butter**
- **1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **1 stalk celery, chopped**
- **2 cloves garlic, chopped**
- **1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme or parsley**
- **6 cups peas, fresh or frozen**
- **½ cup water**
- **4 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth, "no-chicken" broth or vegetable broth**
- **½ cup half-and-half (optional)**
- **½ teaspoon salt**
- **Freshly ground pepper to taste**

1. Heat butter and oil in a large pot over medium heat until the butter melts. Add onion and celery; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 4 to 6 minutes. Add garlic and thyme (or parsley); cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 10 seconds.

2. Stir in peas. Add water and broth; bring to a lively simmer over high heat. Reduce heat to maintain a lively simmer and cook until very tender, about 1 minute.

3. Puree the soup in batches in a blender until smooth. (Use caution when pureeing hot liquids.) Stir in half-and-half (if using), salt and pepper.

SERVES 4: ABOUT 2 CUPS EACH
CAL 287 **FAT** 9G (SAT 3G) **CHOL** 8MG **CARBS** 38G **TOTAL SUGARS** 14G **PROTEIN** 17G **FIBER** 13G **SODIUM** 384MG **POTASSIUM** 813MG **CALCIUM** 80MG **IRON** 4MG **MAGNESIUM** 79MG **THIAMIN** 1MG **FOLATE** 150MCG **VITAMIN A** 1808IU **VITAMIN C** 90MG

Corn Risotto with Tomatoes & Spinach

ACTIVE: 35 min **TOTAL:** 35 min

Corn and tomatoes make this risotto taste like summer itself, but you can stir in almost any vegetables that your family likes. Make this simple entrée vegetarian by swapping in vegetable broth or "no-chicken" broth for the chicken broth.

- **5 cups low-sodium chicken broth**
- **2 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- **¾ cup minced shallots**
- **2 cloves garlic, minced**
- **1½ cups arborio rice**
- **¾ teaspoon salt**
- **¼ teaspoon ground pepper**
- **½ cup dry white wine**
- **1½ cups corn, thawed if frozen**
- **1½ cups baby spinach**
- **¾ cup chopped tomatoes**
- **5 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for garnish**
- **¼ cup chopped fresh basil**

1. Heat broth in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat until steaming.

2. Melt butter in a large pot over medium heat. Add shallots and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 2 minutes. Add garlic and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add rice, salt and pepper and cook, stirring frequently, until the rice begins to turn translucent, about 1 minute. Add wine and cook, stirring constantly, until it has evaporated, about 1 minute.

3. Add 1 cup of the hot broth and cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid is absorbed, 1 to 2 minutes. Continue adding the broth, ½ cup at a time, stirring frequently and waiting until it has been absorbed before adding more, until you've added all the broth, about 20 minutes.

4. Add corn, spinach and tomatoes and stir until the spinach is wilted, about 1 minute. Remove from heat; stir in Parmesan. Serve the risotto topped with basil and more cheese, if desired.

SERVES 6: 1 CUP EACH
CAL 325 **FAT** 7G (SAT 4G) **CHOL** 14MG **CARBS** 53G **TOTAL SUGARS** 5G **PROTEIN** 12G **FIBER** 4G **SODIUM** 447MG **POTASSIUM** 423MG **CALCIUM** 76MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 37MG **FOLATE** 4MCG **VITAMIN A** 1425IU **VITAMIN C** 12MG

Color by Nature

Plants have got it going on when it comes to putting the shades of the rainbow on glorious display. That's why we turned to them here to doll up some delicious deserts.

BY NANCY BAGGETT

Naturally Red Velvet Doughnuts

ACTIVE: 45 min **TOTAL:** 1 hr

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate airtight for up to 2 days or freeze for up to 1 month. Bring to room temperature to serve.

EQUIPMENT: Two 6-cup doughnut pans

Cake batter requires a lot of food coloring or it ends up looking faded. For these unfried doughnuts, we use both sweet red beets and powdered freeze-dried pomegranate arils to deliver a rich red along with bonus antioxidants and fiber.

Doughnuts

¾ cup chopped cooked peeled beets
¾ cup granulated sugar
1 large egg yolk, at room temperature
½ teaspoon kosher salt
¾ cup buttermilk
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup white whole-wheat flour
¼ cup freeze-dried pomegranate powder
2½ tablespoons unsweetened natural cocoa powder (not Dutch-process), sifted
1½ teaspoons baking powder
⅓ cup safflower or canola oil
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

Frosting

1 cup confectioners' sugar
1 tablespoon reduced-fat cream cheese, softened
2 teaspoons lemon juice
¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

1. To prepare doughnuts: Preheat oven to 350°F. Generously coat 12 standard-size doughnut pan cups with cooking spray.

2. Process beets in a food processor until finely chopped, scraping down the sides as necessary. Add granulated sugar, egg yolk and salt; process until completely smooth, 3 to 4 minutes. Add buttermilk and 1 tablespoon vanilla; process, scraping down the sides as needed, until evenly incorporated.

3. Combine all-purpose flour, whole-wheat flour, pomegranate powder, cocoa and baking powder in a medium bowl. Beat oil and butter in a large bowl with an electric mixer until thoroughly blended. With the mixer on low speed, alternately mix the dry ingredients and the wet ingredients into the oil mixture, starting and ending with the dry ingredients and scraping down the sides as needed, until just combined. Divide the batter among the prepared doughnut cups.

4. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the thickest part of a doughnut in the center of the pan comes out clean, 13 to 16 minutes. Cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove the doughnuts from the pan, inverting so the bottoms become the tops, and let cool completely on the rack.

5. To prepare frosting: Beat confectioners' sugar, cream cheese, lemon juice and vanilla in a medium bowl with an electric mixer until smooth. Dip the doughnuts in the frosting. Let stand for about 5 minutes so the frosting can set.

SERVES 12: 1 DOUGHNUT EACH
CAL 272 **FAT** 10G (SAT 3G) **CHOL** 24MG
CARBS 43G **TOTAL SUGARS** 25G (ADDED 25G)
PROTEIN 4G **FIBER** 2G **SODIUM** 169MG
POTASSIUM 86MG

Shortbread Cookies with Blueberry Sparkling Sugar

ACTIVE: 40 min **TOTAL:** 1 hr 35 min

TO MAKE AHEAD: Store sparkling sugar (Steps 1–2) airtight at room temperature for up to 1 month. Store cookies airtight for up to 1 week or freeze for up to 1 month.

EQUIPMENT: Parchment paper

Store-bought decorative sugars just add color and sweetness to baked goods. But when you make your own, like the blueberry sugar here, you add flavor as well.

Blueberry Sparkling Sugar

- ⅓ cup sparkling white crystal decorating sugar or sanding sugar
- 1 teaspoon freeze-dried blueberry powder
- ½ teaspoon water

Cookies

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup white whole-wheat flour
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1 tablespoon safflower or canola oil
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1–2 tablespoons water, as needed

1. To prepare sparkling sugar: Preheat oven to 200°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. Whisk decorating (or sanding) sugar and blueberry powder in a medium bowl. Add water and stir until the sugar is evenly coated. Spread into an even layer on the prepared pan. Place in the oven and turn off the heat. Let the sugar dry for at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours. (If you're using it right away, the sugar doesn't have to be completely dry.) If there are clumps, lay a sheet of parchment on top of the sugar and use a rolling pin to crush.

3. Meanwhile, prepare cookies: Whisk all-purpose flour, whole-wheat flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Beat butter, oil, sugar and vanilla in a large bowl with an electric mixer until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients on low speed until evenly incorporated. If the dough does not come together, add water 1 tablespoon at a time until it holds together.

4. Transfer the dough to a large sheet of parchment paper and shape into a rough square. Cover with another sheet of parchment and roll out into a 12-inch square. Check the underside and roll out any wrinkles. Place the dough, with the parchment, on a large cutting board and refrigerate.

5. When the sugar is done, increase oven temperature to 325°F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

6. Peel the top sheet of parchment off the dough and set aside. With a large knife, carefully trim the dough to form an even square; discard trimmings. Sprinkle the dough evenly with the blueberry sparkling sugar. Replace the parchment over the sugar and press down to embed the sugar in the dough. Discard the top sheet and cut the dough into 36 squares. Using a spatula, transfer the cookies to the prepared pan, spacing them about ½ inch apart.

7. Bake the cookies for 10 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 250°F. Continue baking until the cookies are lightly browned on the bottom, 10 to 12 minutes more. Let cool on the pan for 10 minutes, then transfer to wire racks to cool completely.

SERVES 36: 1 COOKIE EACH
CAL 67 **FAT** 3G (SAT 2G) **CHOL** 7MG **CARBS** 10G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G (ADDED 4G) **PROTEIN** 1G **FIBER** 1G **SODIUM** 20MG **POTASSIUM** 9MG

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Matcha Green Tea Latte at eatingwell.com/matcha

Matcha Magic

Green is gorgeous—and this bright drink is bursting with disease-fighting antioxidants that may play a role in heart health, can help you de-stress and may reduce the risk of cancer. You can make a perfect cup of traditional matcha tea by using a Japanese *chawan* (tea bowl), a *chasen* (tea whisk), a *chashaku* (tea scoop) and a mini sieve. Use the tea scoop to place about ½ teaspoon of matcha powder in the sieve. Sift the powder into the tea bowl to remove any lumps. Add a small amount of hot water (85°C/185°F) to the tea bowl. Use the tea whisk to thoroughly mix the tea powder with the water. Once the powder is entirely dissolved, add more hot water into the tea bowl until you've added about 4 ounces of water total. Continue whisking until a thick foam with tiny bubbles appears. You can enjoy matcha as a hot beverage, pour it over ice for a chilled drink, or add dairy or plant-based milk to make a latte. It's easy to switch up your morning coffee ritual with a cozy cup of matcha latte.

Reap the Benefits

Antioxidants are compounds that protect your brain, stave off disease and aid in healthy aging. These nutrients are found in a vast array of delicious foods, including fruit, spices and even chocolate.